

# VCU Shafer Court Connections

THE MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY > Spring 2008

## Nurturing the Next Generation

VCU and the School of Education  
lead the way with groundbreaking  
programs designed to help future  
teachers thrive

V i r g i n i a   C o m m o n w e a l t h   U n i v e r s i t y



### Student enrollment:

After graduating more than 5,600 students in 2007 — with crowds filling the Alltel Pavilion at the Virginia Commonwealth University Stuart C. Siegel Center in December and the Richmond Coliseum in May — VCU set an enrollment record for the 2007-08 academic year when it welcomed more than 31,000 students to campus. The number includes the largest freshman class in university history — 3,850 undergraduates — and 1,100 international students.



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Student enrollment: 1947.

# Why join your VCU alumni association?

Since arriving in January, each day brings new discoveries about the critical role Virginia Commonwealth University plays in education and economic development, locally and globally. While I was aware of our reputation as a transformational university, conversations with students, alumni and faculty have helped me understand even more about the history, depth and breadth of the university's impact and contributions.

The most frequent question I am asked is, "Why did you join VCU?" I am sharing my response with you in hopes that it might prompt you to reflect on your decision to be an active, dues-paying member of one of our alumni associations, or (in the unfortunate case that you have not yet joined or have allowed your membership to lapse) consider how you may choose to contribute your talent, passion and commitment as an alumni association member.

So, why did I join VCU?

- To support higher education. I believe that higher education is the key that unlocks doors to opportunities. This is particularly true at VCU where many students are the first in their families to receive college degrees. I view higher education as a means to address society's greatest challenges rather than as a competing resource priority.
- To grow, intellectually and culturally, by partnering with other volunteers and staff in a focused, positive alumni environment.
- To contribute to a responsive and effective alumni program that reflects the quality and value of our alumni and university.
- To invest my cognitive, temporal and financial resources in support of alumni and the future of a great university.
- To explore the many opportunities for alumni programs to have a positive impact on and make a positive contribution to others' lives.

Active, dues-paying members of our alumni associations have the opportunity to share and realize these goals through their support and participation. I invite you to join us.

I feel privileged and honored to be offered the chance to join the VCU family and look forward to trying to add value to your alumni programs as your alumni executive.

Yours for VCU,



Gordon A. McDougall  
Assistant Vice President, University Alumni Relations  
gamcdougall@vcu.edu

P.S. I look forward to meeting you and hearing your thoughts and ideas about your alumni program. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me if I may be of any assistance. Go Rams!



Gordon McDougall and his yellow lab, Meghan

## VCU Shafer Court Connections

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### On the cover

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# University news

News, research and administrative changes at Virginia Commonwealth University. For the latest updates, visit the Web at [www.news.vcu.edu](http://www.news.vcu.edu)

## VCU Jazz Orchestra makes history

Antonio García saw something special in this year's VCU Jazz Orchestra I. García, the director of VCU Jazz Studies, wasn't the only one.

The 18-member big-band group joined 29 other organizations from around the world in performing at the 61st annual Midwest Clinic, held Dec. 18-22, 2007, in Chicago. The Jazz Orchestra I becomes the first VCU student ensemble selected for the international band and orchestra conference and the first university jazz band in Virginia ever slated to perform.

For the first time in his 20-year teaching career, García submitted music from a university group to the clinic's selection committee. The return of nearly all the members of the 2006 Jazz Orchestra I and a strong incoming freshman class influenced his decision.

"I knew what we were up against and I felt like this was the year to do it," García says. "The band is at a real peak and the challenge is to continue to rise."

In addition to the live performance, which drew a crowd of 1,000, the Midwest Clinic's Web site will broadcast excerpts from the performance for the following year. Hear two VCU Jazz selections at [www.midwestclinic.org/videos/jazz\\_archive.asp#virginia](http://www.midwestclinic.org/videos/jazz_archive.asp#virginia).

## Trip abroad expands partnerships

In November, VCU President Eugene P. Trani, Ph.D., returned from meetings with four universities in England and Russia with strengthened partnerships.

In England, VCU signed a formal partnership agreement with Harris Manchester College of the University of Oxford.

During meetings at Moscow State University, VCU's relationship was expanded from programs between the VCU L. Douglas Wilder School for Government and Public Affairs and Moscow State's Department of Political History to the rest of Moscow State University, including medicine and history. The trip also resulted in plans to establish a partnership between Clare College, Cambridge University and VCU's Wilder School.

VCU's partnerships have been established to internationalize VCU's campuses and include universities in Qatar, India, Mexico, England, Russia, China, Italy, Spain, Brazil, Ireland, Australia and South Africa.

## Engineering adds new M.S. track

In response to a growing interest in nuclear energy for future electrical production, the VCU School of Engineering has added a nuclear engineering track to its master's degree program.

The program, which started in the fall of 2007, already enrolls 25 students and has been sponsored by Dominion. Students will earn a non-thesis Master of Science in Engineering with a nuclear engineering track.

Nuclear power accounts for about 20 percent of the electricity produced in the U.S., and there is a renewed global interest in such a source of energy, according to Dominion.

The nuclear engineering track will provide the nuclear industry with a new generation of nuclear engineers to support this demand.

## Students make a difference in Africa

Last November, the VCU community raised nearly \$50,000 to help build a child development center for the children of Ghana. Organized and coordinated by Chris Burnside, former assistant dean of student affairs in VCU's School of the Arts, the FOR AFRICA benefit and celebration featured three nights of performances, a silent auction and an African market.

"It's a small miracle!" says Randi Buerlein, assistant director of field instruction for the VCU School of Social Work.

Buerlein has led groups of VCU students, alumni and supporters to Ghana for years. Since 2002,

she and her students have supported the work of Sovereign Global Mission, a nongovernmental organization that serves homeless street children and rural children who can't afford to go to school.

FOR AFRICA's success allowed organizers to donate \$37,000 directly to construction of the child development center, which will serve as a combination school and orphanage for impoverished children in Ghana.

Nearly two dozen people from VCU traveled to Ghana in late December to help with construction of the center, which opened this spring. In addition, the VCU group taught women about health, disease prevention and nutrition, passed out clothing and helped to serve food during Sunday community feedings.

Money raised by FOR AFRICA will also be used to sponsor children at the school through the purchase of books and uniforms. Additional proceeds from the benefit will be set aside to sustain the effort in the future.



## VCU co-hosts Capitol Hill event

More than 80 people joined VCU and Virginia Tech representatives for a Jan. 28 reception on Capitol Hill. The annual event, held prior to the president's State of the Union address, gives university leaders a chance to meet with House and Senate leaders as the new congressional year kicks off. VCU President Eugene P. Tran, Ph.D., and Virginia Tech President Charles W. Steger, Ph.D., addressed the crowd, as did each congressional member.

## Third dental building takes shape

VCU broke ground in October 2007 on a new, \$20 million addition to the VCU School of Dentistry.

The four-story building, named in honor of VCU alumnus and former VCU Rector W. Baxter Perkinson Jr. (D.D.S. '70/D), will house research laboratories, classrooms, conference facilities, dental clinics and faculty offices, and connect the school's existing Wood and Lyons buildings.

Slated to open in summer 2009, the 55,000-square-foot W. Baxter Perkinson, Jr. Building will increase the school's laboratory space, enabling faculty members to expand their research in oral cancer. In an entirely new venture, dentistry and engineering faculty will collaborate on research in dental bioengineering.

## VCU makes AARP's 2007 'best' list

For the third consecutive year, AARP has named VCU one of the "Best Employers for Workers over 50" in the U.S.

VCU ranked No. 30 on AARP's list of the top 50 employers nationwide for fairness of policies and practices toward older workers.

The VCU Adcenter, which has become one of the leading graduate advertising programs in the country by adapting to the ever-changing advertising industry, is evolving again.

The Adcenter — ranked the No. 1 graduate advertising program in the country by Creativity magazine in 2005 and one of the world's 50 Best Design Schools by BusinessWeek magazine in 2007 — has changed its name to the VCU Brandcenter. In addition, the Brandcenter has moved into a striking new home.

"Today's advertising industry has evolved into the business of developing a brand's total communication, influencing everything from strategic plans and message content to the creation of advertising, the retail environment, packaging, Web sites, word-of-mouth messaging and public relations," says Rick Boyko, director of the VCU Brandcenter, founded in 1996. "It is this change in marketing communications that drove us to put brand building front and center in everything we do."

The VCU Brandcenter's new home — a historic 27,000-square-foot building in VCU's new Monroe Park Campus Addition — was designed by the internationally renowned architect Clive Wilkinson, who's designed spaces for Google, Disney, Wolfgang Puck and advertising agencies such as TBWA/Chiat/Day (Los Angeles), Mother (London) and JWT (New York). For this project, he partnered with Richmond-based Baskerville.

## VCU Brandcenter



Cindy Andrews, executive director of human resources for VCU, says older workers are an integral part of the VCU workforce.

"VCU ensures that older workers not only have the right resources to thrive in the workplace, but that they have the flexibility they need," Andrews says. "Most of the benefits that AARP has cited for this award are also available to our younger workers at VCU, but they can be

particularly beneficial for workers who are over the age of 50."

## Dean ends 16-year tenure in June

Frank R. Baskind, Ph.D., dean and professor in the VCU School of Social Work, will end a 16-year tenure as dean in June.

Baskind will remain a distinguished faculty member in the VCU School of Social Work and will engage in special projects for the university.

Under Baskind's leadership, the School of Social Work's reach has grown throughout the state and region. The school developed a community-based Head Start program in Richmond and significantly expanded the Master of Social Work program in Northern Virginia.

## U.S. supports stem cell research

The VCU Life Sciences Survey is the first poll to reflect the discovery reported internationally in November 2007 that human skin cells can be used to create stem cells or their near equivalents.

Three-quarters of the U.S. public supports stem cell research that does not involve human embryos. According to the survey, majorities of nearly all groups in society, including those with differing beliefs about abortion and religious commitment, favor non-embryonic stem cell research.

## Faculty honors

**Faye Belgrave, Ph.D.** ..... State Council of Higher Education for  
Professor, Department of Psychology ..... Virginia 2008 Outstanding Faculty Award

**Sarah Spiegel, Ph.D.** ..... Virginia Outstanding Scientist of 2008  
Professor and chair, Department  
of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

**Robert Godwin-Jones, Ph.D.** ..... Fulbright Scholar grant, 2007-08  
Associate director, School of World Studies

**Judy S. Richardson, Ph.D.** ..... Fulbright Scholar grant, 2007-08  
Professor emerita, School of Education

The findings are part of a nationwide survey conducted by VCU last November via telephone with 1,000 adults. To read more about the survey findings, visit [www.vcu.edu/lifesci/images2/survey2007.pdf](http://www.vcu.edu/lifesci/images2/survey2007.pdf).

## Grant funds study on hearing loss

VCU will use a federal grant to determine how disabilities that are present at birth affect how physicians identify, evaluate and treat hearing loss in infants and young children. Research studies of children with hearing loss typically have excluded those who have additional health problems.

The two-year, \$300,000 grant from the National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will fund a research project that will result in a statewide picture of the number of children born with both hearing loss and other disabilities. Researchers also will assess the impact of hearing loss and other disabilities on the child and the family.

The study will be implemented collaboratively by the Partnership for People with Disabilities and the Virginia Department of Health.

## FDA approves WoundStat's use

A lightweight, granular dressing compound developed by VCU researchers that quickly stems high-pressure bleeding in moderate to severe wounds has received FDA approval and will soon be used in combat.

VCU researchers have been studying the compound — WoundStat — and say federal approval is good news for soldiers and civilians alike, since the product is easy to carry and can be applied on the spot.

The patent-pending technology behind WoundStat is the result of more than three years of study and development by researchers in the VCU Reanimation Engineering Shock Center. VCU licensed the technology behind WoundStat to TraumaCure Inc. of Bethesda, Md.

Both U.S. military and foreign military allies have expressed interest in the new product, but WoundStat's benefits may extend far beyond the battlefield to natural disasters such as earthquakes.

Along with VCURES Associate Director Kevin Ward, VCURES researchers Robert Diegelmann, Ph.D., of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, and Gary Bowlm, Ph.D., of the Department of Biomedical Engineering, are the inventors of the WoundStat technology.

## Online magazine showcases the scope of VCU's research program

Research in biology, chemistry and medicine intersects with the arts, business and world studies in the premiere issue of *Across the Spectrum*, a new online magazine showcasing the scope of VCU's nearly \$250 million research program across both of its campuses.

The inaugural issue includes two in-depth features, one on cardiac-related research at the VCU Pauley Heart Center; and the second, an overview of the research being conducted in the field of homeland security, including using insects as reconnaissance agents.

Additionally, readers learn about the latest in cancer research, the global impact of the media and fashion industry on body image and how VCU is taking research from the laboratory bench to the patient's bedside.

VCU *Across the Spectrum* is available at [www.spectrum.vcu.edu](http://www.spectrum.vcu.edu).

## Genes play an important role in risk for drug abuse and dependence

The genes that play a role in illegal drug abuse are not entirely the same as those involved in dependence on legal substances like alcohol and nicotine, according to a study led by Kenneth S. Kendler, M.D., a professor of psychiatry and human genetics in VCU's School of Medicine. Additionally, caffeine addiction appears to be genetically independent of all the others.

Supported by grants from the National Institutes of Health, researchers examined the degree to which genetic and environmental risk factors for dependence were shared between illicit and the more commonly used licit psychoactive drugs among men and women. Heritability was estimated to be more than 70 percent for cocaine, cannabis and nicotine abuse and dependence, nearly 60 percent for alcohol and around 35 percent for caffeine.

These findings may guide efforts by researchers to use molecular genetic tools to localize genes that influence risk for psychoactive drug abuse or dependence.

## VCU establishes the Center for Clinical and Translational Research

VCU has created the Center for Clinical and Translational Research to enhance the ability of researchers in science and medicine to work across campuses to create new therapies for fighting disease and get them to patients quickly.

Through the center, researchers from the schools of Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Education, Engineering, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and Social Work, as well as VCU Life Sciences and the College of Humanities and Sciences, will have the opportunity to collaborate across disciplines and strengthen VCU's research infrastructure.

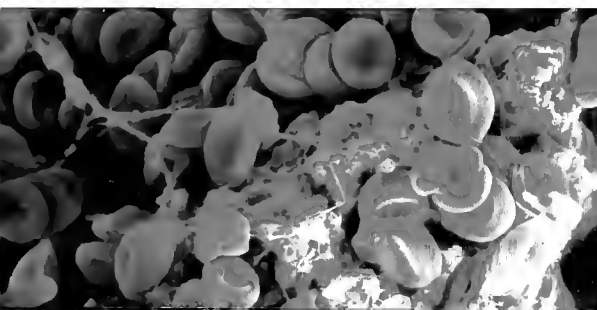
The center, directed by John Clore, M.D., a professor in the VCU School of Medicine, will be supported in part by a National Institutes of Health initiative. The NIH last year began to expand its currently funded infrastructure to build a national consortium of academic health centers to more broadly support clinical and translational science research. By 2012, the NIH's goal is to have 20 institutions — and VCU aims to be one of the funded centers.

## Frontal crash tests predict driver fatality risk in cars but not in trucks

Frontal crash tests in laboratories are strong predictors of passenger cars' safety on the road, though they fail to accurately project driver fatality risks for trucks, according to a recent VCU study.

The study, co-authored by David Harless and George Hoffer, both professors of economics at VCU's School of Business, examined the frontal crash-test ratings that vehicles received from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and compared them to fatality rates in the vehicles. It also compared a smaller sample of test ratings given by the privately funded Insurance Institute for Highway Safety with the vehicles' fatality rates.

The results indicate that the crash tests held by NHTSA and the IIHS are successful in predicting real-world crash outcomes for passenger cars. However, the ratings for trucks did not match real-world outcomes. For example, in the case of both NHTSA and IIHS, trucks that received the worst possible crash-test rating had on average lower driver fatality rates than trucks that received the best possible crash-test rating.











# *Nurturing* the Next Generation

Innovative training programs designed to prepare and support teachers earn high marks

*by Erin Egan*

**L**auree Morgan (B.S. '05/H&S; M.T. '05/E) felt confident when, as a first-year biology teacher, her principal at Hermitage High School in Richmond, Va., asked his new teachers to create lesson plans for the entire semester. While her fellow first-years groaned about the amount of work that lay ahead of them, Morgan smiled to herself. As part of her teacher education training in Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Education, Morgan was required to come up with a viable portfolio of lesson plans. She was ready for the assignment.

"All my lesson plans were done," Morgan says. With a few tweaks, she was good to go.

VCU and the School of Education work to ensure all education graduates feel as prepared in the classroom as Morgan does. The university and the school, along with faculty from various disciplines, have implemented several innovative and instructive programs

to better train and support today's education students to become tomorrow's brightest teachers.

Dedicated, quality educators are always in demand, but soon the need will grow. Because of teacher attrition and retirement and increased student enrollment, it's estimated that in the next decade U.S. schools will need between 2 million and 2.5 million new teachers, according to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. Many of these teaching vacancies will be in the sciences.

Focused on staying ahead of the curve, VCU is committed to meeting the demand for excellent teachers in the sciences and all subjects.

"There is nothing more important to our country's future than providing a quality education for all children," says School of Education Dean Beverly J. Warren, Ed.D., Ph.D., FACSM. "That means we must prepare competent and highly qualified teachers and school leaders who are capable of meeting the needs of all children."

“There is *nothing*  
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— School of Education  
Dean Beverly J. Warren,  
Ed.D., Ph.D., FACSM

## Laying a more solid foundation

Teacher training begins appropriately enough in the classroom. Aside from preparing students to pass the necessary standardized examinations, **Jacqueline McDonnough**, Ph.D., (B.S. '89/E; M.Ed. '99/E), an assistant professor of science education in the School of Education's Department of Teaching and Learning, makes sure her students know their subject inside and out and are proficient in the latest technology, from software to hardware. She wants them to be ready for anything in case they go into a school that is not the most up-to-date. In terms of technology, “some schools have caught up fast, others not so fast,” she says.



**As an assistant professor in the VCU School of Education's Department of Teaching and Learning, Jacqueline McDonnough, Ph.D. (above right), makes sure her students stay on top of current trends and incorporate them into their lesson plans.**

So students must learn to be flexible and be able to teach no matter what the facilities are like.

For example, McDonnough says, “one student had to do a chemistry lab virtually because the school lab was 50 years out of date.”

In addition to being techno-savvy, McDonnough's students write numerous practical — not theoretical — lesson plans. She exposes her students to different curricula and encourages them to be aware of current trends and news stories and incorporate them in their lessons. “I try to hammer home that the world is changing rapidly and science teachers need to be ready to incorporate those changes into their instruction,” McDonnough says.

**Eve O'Connor** (B.S. '03/H&S; M.T. '06/E) says that message came through loud and clear. O'Connor teaches biology at Atlee High School in Mechanicsville, Va., and is pursuing her master's in biology at VCU. “Dr. McDonnough instilled in us that science is a process and constantly changing,” O'Connor says. “We have to stay up on it.”

VCU education students examine and debate the hot topics of the day, including stem cells, genetics and the environment. Not only are these subjects relevant, but more kids are interested in them, especially at the high school level.

Morgan says those discussions helped her when she was teaching evolution and her students balked at the topic. Because she had talked the issue over with her fellow teachers in training, “I felt

comfortable talking about it with my students without getting emotional," Morgan says.

O'Connor sometimes puts a lesson on hold if a news event relates to her class. "My students like to talk about current things," she says. "I break it down for them. Then they may hear about it later and it will click."

## Keeping teachers in the classroom

Both of these young teachers see themselves staying in the field for the long haul. That's good news for the education profession. Hiring quality teachers may be difficult, but retaining them is even more of a challenge. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, up to one-third of all teachers leave the profession within the first three years and an astounding 50 percent are no longer teaching by the fifth year. This is especially true in high-need schools.

Terry Dozier, Ed.D., director of the Center for Teacher Leadership at the VCU School of Education, is closely acquainted with these statistics. She also chairs the Metropolitan Education Training Alliance, or META, a partnership between VCU and the four local school districts — Richmond and Chesterfield, Hanover and Henrico counties. The partnership identifies training needs of these local school systems and works to meet those needs.

VCU's School of Education was awarded a \$5.9 million five-year grant to develop and retain teachers by improving student learning and supporting teachers for the first two years of their careers. Under this U.S. Department of Education grant, awarded in 2004, several META Teacher Development and Retention Project goals are already producing positive results.

The first grant objective was to redesign the major for elementary teachers at VCU. Prior to getting this grant, about 70 percent of elementary education students at VCU majored in psychology. Psychology is a fine degree, Dozier says, but it doesn't help a person teach math, science, social studies and English. The new interdisciplinary major, liberal studies for early and elementary education, or LSEE, is evenly balanced among the four core subjects. "That's going to strengthen the content knowledge of elementary teachers because now they are going to have a balanced content preparation," Dozier says.

Robert Fisher, Ph.D., directs the Extended Teacher Preparation Program in the College of Humanities and Sciences. An associate professor of biology, he's one of many VCU faculty members involved in the grant to make sure its goals are being met. In his role as director of teacher education, Fisher has seen the number of students enrolled in the LSEE major expand from 200 just 18 months ago to close to 500 today. He believes that the redesigned major will furnish new teachers with the knowledge to connect with each of their students and succeed in the classroom.

"We want to give pre-teachers enough depth so they'll have enough experience to pick up on what excites their students, whether it's math, science or history," Fisher says.

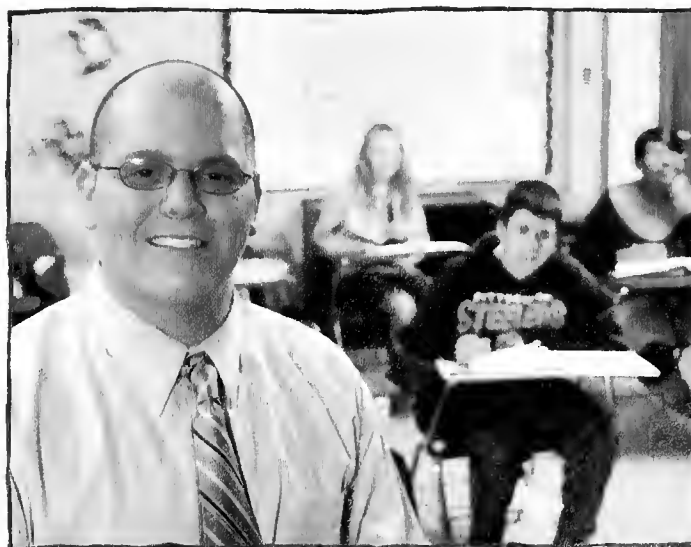
## Pairing students with role models

Working in the classroom with teachers gives students that extra edge of real-world experience. At VCU, the Clinical Faculty Placement Program, part of the META grant, ensures that the student-teacher partnership isn't left to chance. Dozier created the placement program because she heard faculty members mention that the student-teacher match wasn't always a good fit. In the past, VCU relied on the school systems to place its student teachers and the process was often hit or miss. The Clinical Faculty Placement Program identifies excellent teachers who *want* to work with student teachers and trains them to do so.

"That's been a huge step forward," Dozier says. "It's a win-win for everybody because we ensure that our students are placed with the best teachers and the school systems no longer have the burden of trying to find placements."

**Tory Hendelman** (B.A. '06/H&S; Cert. '06/H&S) teaches eighth-grade language arts at Liberty Middle School in Ashland, Va. He says the placement program primed him for his own classroom. "It was a positive experience," he says. "The first two weeks I just observed [the other teacher], which was great. You're not expected to teach right away so it eases you into it."

The program results in better prepared teachers, and the school divisions are taking note. In fact, the four local school divisions hire more than 90 percent of VCU teacher education graduates each year. The program not only helps student teachers, it's also a successful retention tool for experienced teachers. "You're honoring their knowledge, skill and experience," Dozier says. "You're saying to them, 'You have something of value and we see you as equal partners in preparing future teachers.'"



**The Clinical Faculty Placement Program matches experienced educators with student teachers such as Tory Hendelman (above), an eighth-grade language arts instructor at Liberty Middle School in Ashland, Va., and prepares them to lead their own classrooms.**



## Supporting up-and-coming teachers

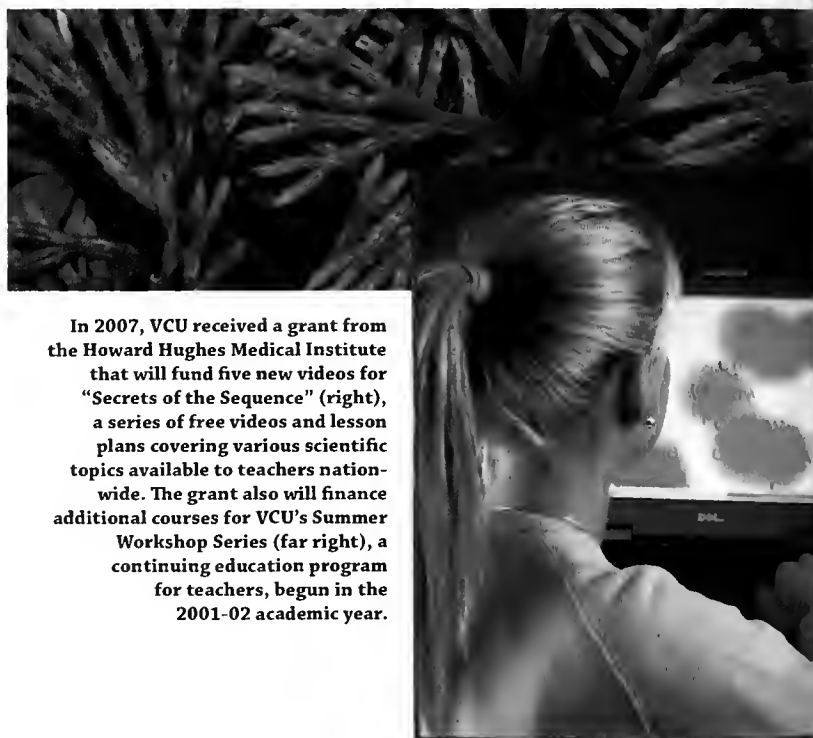
The Beginning Teacher Adviser Program, the last piece of the META grant puzzle, offers yet another opportunity for experienced teachers to share their knowledge and a unique way to support teachers throughout the community who are just embarking on their careers. Previously, a mentoring system was the standard. A new teacher would be paired with another teacher in the same school at the same grade level and check in with him or her from time to time. Under the new program, a highly trained beginning teacher adviser works with 10 to 15 new teachers exclusively for two years. The advisers provide practical and emotional support to their new teachers so that they become the best teachers they can be as quickly as they can. "It's really focused on instruction," Dozier says, "not just helping them survive, but thrive, in those first two years."

Zorion Rinaldi III is in his first full year of teaching world history and government at John Marshall High School in Richmond, Va. Mr. Z, as he's known to his students, meets with his adviser at least a few times a month. "It's been wonderful for me," he says. "I just go to her with my questions and she has all the answers."

Mr. Z's adviser has made him aware of additional tests he can take to qualify for teaching special education. "She introduces me to things I didn't even know I needed to know," he says. Prior to teaching full time, Mr. Z worked as a substitute. He sees the advising program as a welcome advantage. "It's nice to have the support system there," he says.

Not surprisingly, the program is highly competitive and selective. In the first pilot stage, 220 teachers applied for 12 slots. "We have the best of the best," Dozier says. The program is now in its second pilot stage in the highest-need schools in the four local school districts.

"We believe that rigorous preparation of school personnel culminating in a closely supervised and meaningful capstone experience, as well as ongoing professional support for young professionals, are critical components to ensure that we provide and retain good teachers and school leaders in all schools, particularly those located in our most challenged environments," Warren says.



**In 2007, VCU received a grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute that will fund five new videos for "Secrets of the Sequence" (right), a series of free videos and lesson plans covering various scientific topics available to teachers nationwide. The grant also will finance additional courses for VCU's Summer Workshop Series (far right), a continuing education program for teachers, begun in the 2001-02 academic year.**

## Offering extra educational resources

Central Virginia schools will soon have even more resources, thanks to a prestigious grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute that VCU received in 2007. The \$750,000, five-year grant will help develop programs for students in the region to increase proficiency in math and science, enhance research and life sciences knowledge for K-12 science teachers and expand an already successful series of Web-based life sciences videos and lessons for teachers and students nationwide.

"The grant allows us to do some things that we very much want to do," says Richard Rezba, Ph.D., director of VCU's Center for Life Sciences Education and program director for the grant.

The HHMI grant has several components, including the production of five new videos for "Secrets of the Sequence," a series of free videos and lesson plans covering topics such as anatomy, biotechnology, botany, forensic science and genetics. Teachers can download the videos from a Web site ([www.vcu.edu/secretsofthesequence](http://www.vcu.edu/secretsofthesequence)) and use the eight- to 10-minute films in their classrooms. "They've got a lot of punch," Rezba says, "and are very easy for a teacher to infuse into their existing lessons."





"[The Summer Workshop Series course] really *formalized* my knowledge and *filled* in the gaps of *my education*."

— David Allen, King George High School teacher

"Secrets of the Sequence" began in 2001-02 and since then nearly 70,000 copies of the videos have been downloaded. The five new topics will include family health history, student research, human health and performance, biological complexity and systems biology.

The HHMI grant also will fund development of additional summer teacher workshops. VCU started its Summer Workshop Series for teachers in 2002 with one course and 16 local teachers. The series has grown exponentially since then.

"Each of the last two years we've had more than 100 teachers from 10 different states taking any of seven different courses," Rezba says. When the program originated, the courses were all science-related. The model has been so successful that courses in art, economics and foreign language are now offered.

Each Summer Workshop Series course offers intensive instruction for one week in June or July. A follow-up independent study application occurs in the fall in order for teachers to receive final credit; teachers must provide evidence that they are using what they learned in their classrooms.

David Allen teaches earth science, biology, geology and marine biology at King George High School in King George, Va. He took "Entomology: Terrestrial and Aquatic Insects" for credit in 2007. Allen loved the experience and was impressed with his instructors, whom he calls top notch. "It really formalized my knowledge and filled in the gaps of my education," he says. "I want to do it again for fun — even if I don't get the credit."

Allen's reaction is typical of summer workshop participants. Ninety-five percent of teacher participants choose the highest rating for these courses and have since 2002, Rezba says. "We have a nice, successful model of recognizing that teachers today don't have the time or finances to come to a university and spend a summer," he says. "They need to come here, work hard for a week, then take what they've learned and apply it."

## Collaborating on program creation

The ultimate goal of the HHMI grant is to expose students and teachers to the concepts of systems biology, an approach in which all the molecular interactions in a system — pathway, organelle, cell, organism or ecosystem — are examined to understand function. Systems biology is being incorporated in VCU's undergraduate and graduate curriculum through another HHMI grant awarded in 2006. That \$1.5 million grant is headed by Gregory Buck, Ph.D., director of VCU's Center for the Study of Biological Complexity. "I've bought in to the idea that systems biology is what students need to know how to do," Buck says. "It's competitive for our students and our country."

Some of the best scientists in the world are supported by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Buck says. So VCU is in good company. "The image of a scientist is one with his head in a beaker," he says. "That's not entirely accurate." Buck says it may surprise people to know that there are a lot of scientists, including many at VCU, who are very interested in students and creating programs specifically for them.

What impresses Fisher about the grants and programs being implemented at VCU is the cooperation across the university. "It's exciting to see the partnerships that are taking place between the different units within VCU — the College of Humanities and Sciences and the School of Education, and VCU and the community," he says.

Teaching is often called the hardest job in the world. Hopefully, with generous grant funding and faculty commitment and dedication, the resources VCU offers its future teachers will make the job a bit easier. At the very least, these programs will ensure that future educators are prepared when they leave their university classrooms and walk into their own.

Erin Egon is a contributing writer for *Shafter Court Connections*.



# FIRST FRIDAYS

Seven years after the inaugural First Fridays event, Christina Newton still marvels at the throngs of people who spill onto Broad Street on the first Friday of each month.

"I'm always shocked at how many people are on the street — and in the street, blocking traffic," says Newton, the organizer and marketing director for the monthly artwalk program she helped found in downtown Richmond, Va.

The success of First Fridays shouldn't surprise her, Newton says. The idea originated in 2000 when the five existing galleries on Broad Street pooled their resources. The galleries were already holding individual openings on the first Friday of every month, but nothing was coordinated. Newton knew that artwalk programs were popular in other cities and suggested that Richmond start one of its own.

"I knew that Charlottesville had First Friday openings and Fredericksburg and Washington, D.C.," she says. "It was kind of like, we *have* to be able to do something in Richmond with our amazing arts community."

With the support of Artspace, where Newton worked at the time, the five galleries, the Richmond Public Library, the Virginia Fire and Police Museum, the Valentine Richmond History Center, and The Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia formed a steering committee. The group put together a scheduled artwalk on the first Friday of every month, called "First Fridays On and Off Broad" from October to June. "That was really where we got our start," Newton says. "Just formalizing what was already happening and joining forces."

## Concept takes off

The idea was an immediate hit, with nine venues participating and 17,000 people attending in 2001-02. The next year, the nonprofit organization Curated Culture was formed to oversee First Fridays with Newton at the helm. Since then, First Fridays has more than tripled in size with 30 diverse sites participating. These locations include galleries, restaurants, shops and cultural venues, such as The Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia, Theatre IV and the Richmond Public Library.



# The festive monthly arts event continues to expand and revitalize downtown Richmond

by Erin Egan

Attendance rates vary, but it's estimated that between 2,000 and 5,000 people turn out for First Fridays, which since 2007 occurs monthly.

The success of First Fridays has encouraged numerous new businesses, including restaurants and coffee shops, to open in the downtown area. That has had a huge impact on the program, Newton says. "You can come downtown, you can have dinner, you can have a drink, you can go see the openings, go to the theater and see a performance," she says. "It's not just coming down, seeing one show and leaving as much as it used to be."

It wasn't too long ago that downtown Richmond was more deserted than a destination. Today, people feel safer about heading to the area and First Fridays has helped change that mindset. "We feel that we have made a gigantic dent in economic development and community development, particularly for downtown," Newton says.

Curated Culture has worked with the Richmond Police Department to enhance the experience for visitors. In the past year, more police officers have patrolled the area during the artwalks and bright work lights now illuminate the neighborhood, especially parking lots. "One of the early problems we had was a perception of safety downtown," Newton says. "Now the problem is more 'I can't find parking!' Things have really changed."

## Opportunities abound

First Fridays was already in full swing when longtime Richmond native Kathy Emerson opened Quirk Gallery two years ago two doors down from 1708 Gallery, a leader in the city's art scene, and near six other galleries. "First Fridays is a lot busier than in the past," she says. "It has certainly grown immeasurably."

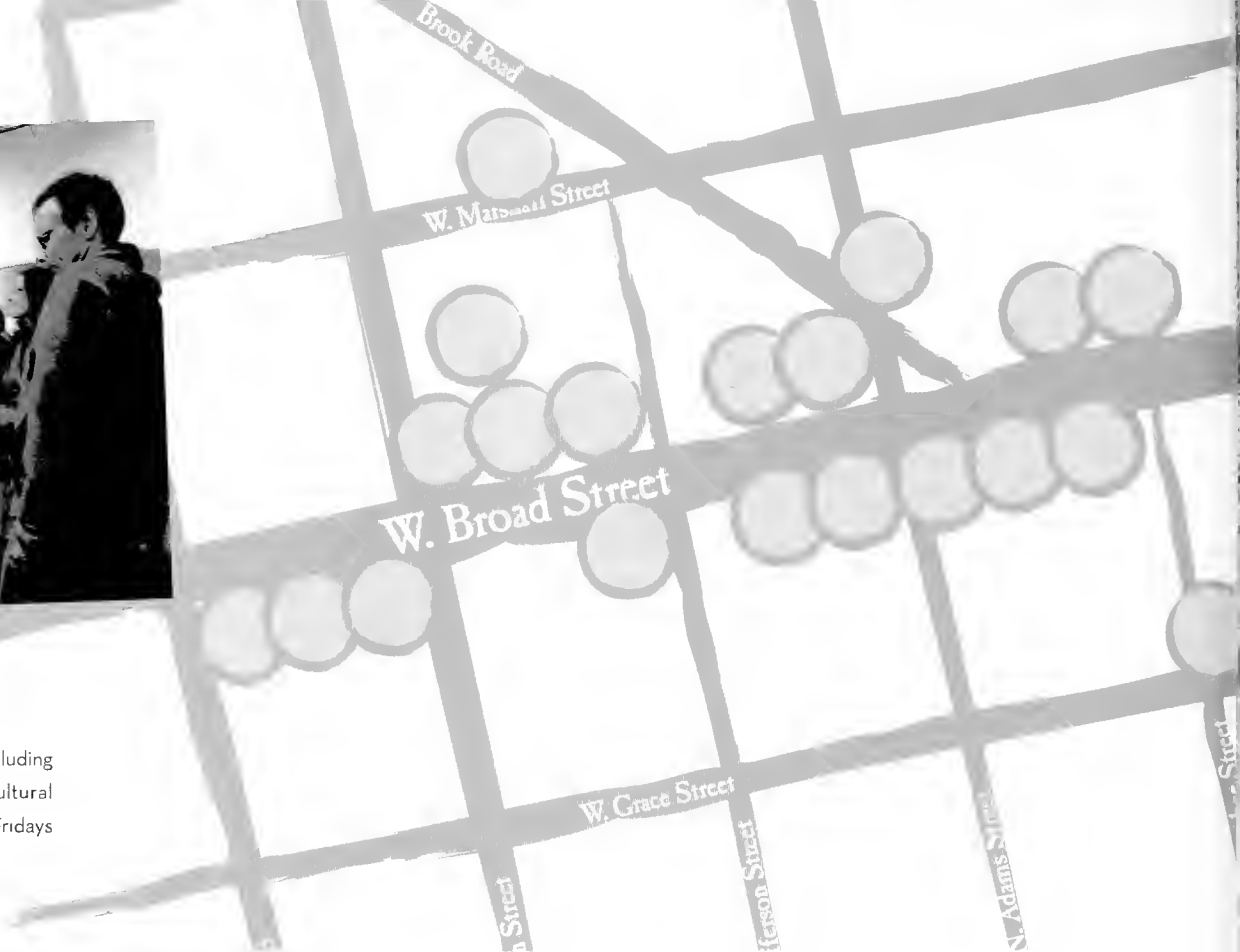
Quirk has a line out the door on First Fridays. The crowd buzzes with excitement and crosses all demographics,

Large crowds spill into venues such as 1708 Gallery, ada Gallery and Quirk Gallery to soak up art on First Fridays.





Today, more than 30 diverse sites — including galleries, restaurants, shops and cultural venues — open their doors for First Fridays every month.



from VCU students to suburban families. While the event has seen steady growth, it has seemed organic in its expansion, Emerson says. "When you have an arts community, it feeds off itself," she adds. "It's a very healthy thing for Richmond. It's busy, bustling and full of visitors."

Given Quirk's proximity to VCU, the gallery has a close relationship with the university's craft and material studies department. Quirk shows artwork of VCU graduates, students and some faculty. Other galleries do the same.

"Students have a future here," Sally Bowring (M.F.A. '83/A) says. Bowring has taught in the VCU painting and printmaking department for 23 years and has worked in the university's Anderson Gallery. "They are supposed to be professional artists when they leave here — and they can be," she says.

Bowring familiarizes her students with many of the downtown galleries and encourages them to go to First Fridays. "It's like being in art heaven," she says.

The success of First Fridays amazes and delights Bowring. "People line up to get into galleries!" she says. "You'd think they were giving away free paintings." But the overwhelming response comes as no surprise. "This is a visual arts town,"

**"When you have an arts community, it feeds off itself. [First Fridays] is a very healthy thing for Richmond. It's busy, bustling and full of visitors."**

— Kathy Emerson, co-director of Quirk Gallery

Bowring says. "Other mediums might struggle but not visual arts. It's fabulous."

Andras Balaty (B.F.A. '86/A) is another Richmond native and a celebrated local artist whose paintings have been shown in New York and Hungary, as well as in galleries on First Fridays. As a kid, he remembers downtown as a vibrant place. First Fridays has brought needed life back to the area. "It's meant a lot to me to see Broad Street reborn," he says.

As a member of the Richmond arts community for more than 20 years, Balaty is pleasantly surprised to see how the First Fridays crowd has expanded. "It used to be those who knew the artists," he says. "Now it's people outside of the arts community. It's so exciting that so many Richmonders are drawn to the art."

## Performers engage

Visitors come to First Fridays to experience art, but music and live performances also draw big audiences. Taylor Barnett (B.M. '02/A; M.M. '04/A) has been at VCU for the past 10 years as an undergraduate and graduate student and, since 2004, as an adjunct professor of music. He has seen First Fridays evolve firsthand, performing on the trumpet with the No B.S. Brass Band at several of the monthly events.

"I think it's fantastic," Barnett says of First Fridays. "It might be one of the coolest artistic things in Richmond. When I'm playing there it makes me feel like I'm in a bigger city."

Barnett tells a story of what he says epitomizes First Fridays. At the October 2007 event, Barnett's band was playing Michael



# SECOND SATURDAYS

## Art, up close and personal

Jackson's "Thriller," the band's big finale. As they were playing, a young guy walked by and began dancing à la Jackson. The interaction between the crowd and the band was infectious. People cheered and the band loved the impromptu performance.

The spontaneity of the event is what makes it so enjoyable for spectators and performers. "First Fridays is different every time," Barnett says. "It's multimedia, which is perfect for our music. It helps to have people engage."

Barnett encourages his students to attend First Fridays because the crowd has an understanding of what's on display. "You're playing to people who appreciate the art and the music," he says. "They get it. And it makes them feel good."

Barnett is just waiting for organizers to close down Broad Street to the hordes of First Fridays attendees as the event continues to grow. "I'm looking forward to more revitalization," he says. "There is so much stuff going on."

Now the trick is to get as many people downtown on other nights of the week and not just on First Fridays.

"We've got the people here, we've got the arts and culture here, we've got the businesses," Newton says. What's still needed are more retail shops such as dry cleaners and grocery stores, businesses that make up a viable, 24/7 neighborhood. "That will take us to the next step," she says. "And I won't be so surprised when I see people on the street."

For more information about First Fridays, including a schedule and list of participating venues, visit [www.firstfridaysrichmond.com](http://www.firstfridaysrichmond.com).

Erin Egan is a contributing writer for Shafer Court Connections.

In an effort to encourage more people to come downtown at times other than First Fridays, Curated Culture has launched another monthly program called Second Saturdays. First Fridays is a great event with a fun, party atmosphere, but because of the huge crowds it's often difficult for serious art lovers to view the work. The idea behind Second Saturdays is to give people a quieter, more intimate experience at the galleries. "People can talk with the gallery owners and directors about the art and really see the work," says Christina Newton, organizer and marketing director of the event.

Some participating venues have scheduled activities on Second Saturdays. One gallery may have an artist talk or there may be a musician playing at the Richmond Public Library. Curated Culture also is considering the idea of offering guided tours for groups interested in a more personal experience at the venues.

Second Saturdays is part of a plan to inform the community that downtown is a lively place on other days of the week. Newton says more development on the program is expected in spring 2008. But she is hopeful the word will get out and draw a larger audience.

"I think the continued developments downtown will bring more businesses and encourage people to think of downtown as a destination other than just on First Fridays," Newton says.

For the latest information on Second Saturdays, visit [www.secondsaturdaysrichmond.com](http://www.secondsaturdaysrichmond.com).



# For the love

by Melanie Irvin Solaimani

After visiting a buddy at Virginia Commonwealth University, 18-year-old **Tom Snead Jr.** (B.S. '76/B) knew he was ready to say goodbye to the Halifax County, Va., tobacco farm he called home. He yearned for the big city.

In sleepy Chester, Va., **Vickie Miller** (B.S. '76/B) followed the advice of her mother, Mildred, and enrolled at VCU, instead of attending Richard Bland Community College.

Tom and Vickie were trailblazers — they both were the first in their families to attend college.

At VCU, they fell in love with their university and with each other, marrying three weeks after graduation.

More than 30 years later, they say, they are still reaping the benefits of their education. And they are still blazing new trails.

"Here we were [after graduation], poor as church mice," Tom says. "When we look back, we never could imagine being where we are today, and it all started at VCU."

The fall of 1972 was a blur as both students adjusted to college life. Their paths crossed one December day in the Hibbs dining hall. Vickie spotted Tom and asked a hallmate about him. Her friend invited Tom to a "party" (actually four boys and four girls) the next night at their place in Rhoads Hall.

After the 10 p.m. curfew at Rhoads, they moved to Tom's dorm, Chalkley House, which had 24-hour coed visitation in the lobby, to continue their intense conversation.

The next morning, Vickie rolled out of bed, late for her 8 a.m. class. She pulled on clothes and scurried to Hibbs. As she sat down, she looked across the room and directly at ... Tom Snead. Neither knew they shared a class. She slid down, hoping he wouldn't see her.

"I was certain if he saw me like this, he would never call me again," she says.

She didn't need to worry. Two nights later, they had their first "real" date, and they've been inseparable since.

Soon they were thriving in the classroom, too — Vickie pursuing a marketing degree and Tom focusing on accounting. The couple worked throughout college and took summer classes.

"I've been here 39 years and I've taught about 16,000 students. There are not a lot of students you can remember from day one. I remember them [Tom and Vickie]," says economics professor George Hoffer. "They were bright, young and energetic."

Vickie earned a scholarship from Miller & Rhoads and landed a job there. She rose

through the ranks, eventually becoming vice president for merchandise planning and stock control.

As a self-described "long-haired hippie" student, Tom was hired by VCU alumnus **Donald B. Dodson** (B.S. '64/B) as an "office boy" at Peat Marwick Mitchell. "It was great discipline, learning to allocate your time for working, studying, going to class. And it offered peer pressure," Tom says. "Here were all of these young, successful people, and I really wanted to be one of them."

Another VCU alumna, **Phyllis Cothran** (B.S. '71/B), recruited Tom for a job at Blue Cross and Blue Shield. After helping take the company (then Trigon) public, he retired in 2006 as president and CEO of the Southeast Region for WellPoint Inc.

I think if people would just come back and look,  
that would invite involvement right there.

It feels good to

# give back.

# of VCU

Now both retired, they stay plugged into their community and their alma mater.

In 2003, VCU President Eugene P. Trani, Ph.D., invited the Sneads to dinner. He asked them to serve as co-chairs of the \$330.5 million Campaign for VCU.

The Sneads were honored to be asked, they say, but nervous, too.

"I told Tom, 'This could be the biggest embarrassment of our lives or the most wonderful moment.' And it was one of the most wonderful," Vickie says.

Under the leadership of the Sneads and Charlotte and Jim Roberts representing the MCV Campus, the Campaign for VCU raised \$410.3 million, including \$160 million for the Monroe Park Campus.

With the campaign complete, Vickie and Tom are back to enjoying life as alumni, attending as many men's basketball games as possible and otherwise staying involved. On the first day of classes this spring, they greeted students in the new home of the School of Business, Snead Hall.

"It is so humbling to have a building named after you while you are still alive," Tom says.

Hoffer is among the many who think the Sneads are quite worthy. "They are the epitome of what VCU stands for," he says.

"It is so heartwarming to now see how they have given back to their university."

Among their other community commitments, Tom serves on the VCU Board of Visitors and the board of directors for the VCU Health System. He also is a founding trustee of the VCU School of Business Foundation Board. Vickie is a member of the Massey Cancer Center Advisory Board and the VCU Alumni Association Board.

"Vickie Snead's participation in the VCU Alumni Association is nothing less than inspirational. Vickie embodies the variety of ways an individual can make a lasting impact on her fellow alumni," says VCUAA President **Dan Massey** (B.S. '92/B). "Vickie's goal is to take an active role in expanding and promoting the excitement of VCU with all alumni, and her reward is having a front-row seat to see it come to fruition. This opportunity exists for all alumni who want to make a difference."

The Sneads heartily agree, saying all it will take for alumni to want to get involved is a campus visit.

"It's a whole new VCU," Vickie says. "It's just so great to see the kids on campus, to see how the campus has

grown. I think if people would just come back and look, that would invite involvement right there. It feels good to give back."

Give back however possible — big or small, time or resources, Tom agrees.

"When you get to an age and stage in your life and your career, you think, 'Gosh how did I get here?' Then you start reflecting back on what made all of this possible," Tom says. "And it all comes back to VCU."

*Melanie Irvin Solaimoni (B.S. '96/MC) is a contributing writer for Shafer Court Connections.*



Vickie and Tom Snead Jr.

# THE BIG PICTURE

**CONCRETE COLLABORATION** > The January 2008 opening of the \$228 million Monroe Park Campus Addition finally answers an age-old question: Is two of something really better than one? Virginia Commonwealth University's new 11-acre residential campus, located east of Belvidere Street, brings together two schools — Business and Engineering — in one joint space designed to foster greater collaboration among their students. The 125,000-square-foot School of Business — named Snead Hall — and the School of Engineering's 115,000-square-foot East Hall share an atrium and career center, while providing students and faculty with innovative facilities such as enhanced laboratory and research space and a team-building room. And, the new da Vinci Center — housed in East Hall's Pauley Pavilion — creates a central location where the schools of the Arts, Business and Engineering will partner on product design and development. With a projected enrollment increase of 2,000 students in business and engineering, the innovative complex moves two schools into one cohesive complex. The final outcome? Unlimited opportunities.









# Alumni Stars

VCU recognizes alumni for success and service

At Virginia Commonwealth University's Commencement in May, the alumni associations will honor 14 of the university's most accomplished alumni.

The now-annual event honors VCU alumni who have enjoyed notable professional success or who have made significant humanitarian, university or community service contributions. Honorees are selected through faculty recommendations and alumni committees from across the university.

"Recognizing and honoring these Alumni Stars for their outstanding achievements is a marvelous way to highlight our graduates and the breadth and depth of their leadership and contributions," says Gordon McDougall, assistant vice president for university alumni relations. "The Alumni Stars program is a distinctive opportunity to assemble alumni leaders with their peers, before a universitywide audience, to celebrate alumni leadership, pride and unity."



## Golden Bethune-Hill

*School of Nursing - Professional Achievement*

Bethune-Hill received her Master of Science degree from the School of Nursing in 1985. As executive vice president and administrator of Riverside Regional Medical Center in Newport News, Va., she is the highest-ranking black woman in the history of Riverside Hospital System. Prior to joining Riverside, she was senior vice president of patient care services at Centra Health Care and led the organization to Magnet status, nursing's highest recognition. ★



## Donwan Harrell

*School of the Arts - Professional Achievement*

Harrell received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the School of the Arts in 1992. The Murfreesboro, N.C., native, who spent endless weekends and summers as a youth working with his mother's Singer sewing machine, is the president and creative director of Kemistre 8 LLC. Based in New York City, Kemistre 8 houses the Akademiks brand, a line of urban clothing popular with hip-hop music fans, as well as PRPS jeans, which are sported by professional athletes. ★



## Mark Crabtree

*School of Dentistry - Community Service/  
Professional Achievement/University Service*

Crabtree received his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree in 1985 from the School of Dentistry. As president of the Piedmont Virginia Dental Health Foundation, he spearheaded the organization's effort to bring a dental clinic to serve low-income individuals in Martinsville, Va. Begun in 2006, the Community Dental Clinic preceptorship program is staffed by fourth-year VCU dentistry students. ★



## Sheila Hill-Christian

*College of Humanities and Sciences - Professional Achievement*

Hill-Christian earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from the College of Humanities and Sciences in 1981. As chief administrative officer for the city of Richmond, she is responsible for the day-to-day management of city departments and agencies. With 16 years of management experience to her credit, Hill-Christian has worked in various capacities for the state lottery and in housing and transportation for the city government. ★



## John Cragin

*School of Social Work - Professional Achievement*

Cragin received his Master of Social Work degree from the School of Social Work in 1979. He serves as senior director of Commonwealth Care for Boston Medical Center's HealthNetPlan. As Massachusetts' largest and only statewide Commonwealth Care program - a state-subsidized insurance program for the previously uninsured - HealthNet provides its 75,000 members with free or low-cost health services. ★



## Stephen Offenbacher

*School of Medicine, Basic Health Sciences -  
Professional Achievement*

Offenbacher received his Doctor of Dental Surgery from the School of Dentistry in 1976 and his doctorate in biochemistry in 1977 from the School of Medicine. An international expert in periodontal disease, his work has been continuously funded by the National Institutes of Health. He is a distinguished professor in the School of Dentistry, Department of Periodontology, at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. ★



### Mary Perkinson

*School of Engineering - Professional Achievement/  
University Service*

Perkinson received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the School of the Arts in 1991 and her second VCU degree, a Bachelor of Science from the School of Engineering, in 2003. She works as an engineer with Northrop Grumman in Newport News, Va. In 2004, she received the company's Model of Excellence Award for her work in helping improve retention and provide a more supportive environment for entry-level employees. ★



### Thomas Silvestri

*School of Business - Professional Achievement/  
University Service*

Silvestri received his Master of Business Administration from the School of Business in 1986. He began his career with Media General Inc. as a copy editor at the Richmond Times-Dispatch, the city's daily newspaper, and now serves as its publisher. Silvestri recently finished a two-year stint as president of the VCU School of Business Alumni Board and will become chairman of Leadership Metro Richmond in late 2008. ★



### Jonathan Perlin

*School of Medicine - Humanitarian Achievement/  
Professional Achievement*

Perlin earned two degrees from the School of Medicine, a doctorate in pharmacology and toxicology in 1991 and a medical degree in 1992. In 1997, he earned a master's degree from the School of Allied Health Professions.

After serving as undersecretary of health in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Perlin was appointed in 2006 by HCA as its chief medical officer and president of its clinical services group. ★



### Patricia Slattum

*School of Pharmacy - Community Service/  
University Service*

Slattum received two degrees from the School of Pharmacy: a bachelor's in 1982 and a doctorate in 1992. She also earned a certificate in gerontology from the School of Allied Health Professions in 1992. As an associate professor in VCU's pharmacy school, Slattum focuses her research on the effect of medications on cognitive functioning in older adults. She was selected as the school's 2005 Teacher of the Year. ★



### Mark Raper

*School of Mass Communications - Community Service/  
Professional Achievement*

Raper received a Bachelor of Science degree in 1982 from the School of Mass Communications. Under Raper's leadership as chairman and CEO, CRT/tanaka has become one of the largest and most decorated independent public relations firms in the country. Based in Richmond, Va., with offices in New York, Los Angeles and Norfolk, Va., the company has twice been named the "Best PR Agency to Work for in America." ★



### Robert Wittman

*L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public  
Affairs - Professional Achievement*

Wittman received his doctorate in 2002 from the College of Humanities and Sciences. From 2005 to 2007, he served in the Virginia House of Delegates before voters in the state's First District chose him as their U.S. representative. When not on Capitol Hill, Wittman works as an environmental health specialist for local health departments in Virginia's Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula areas. ★



### Cathy Saunders

*School of Allied Health Professions - Professional  
Achievement/University Service*

Saunders earned her Bachelor of Social Work degree in 1976 from the School of Social Work and in 1982 received a Master of Science degree from the School of Allied Health Professions. A real estate agent with Long and Foster Realtors, Saunders doubles as a professional gerontologist and has served as past president of the Greater Richmond Alzheimer's Association and as vice chair of the Virginia Alzheimer's Commission. ★



### Patricia Wright

*School of Education - Professional Achievement*

Wright received her Master of Education from the School of Education in 1984. A 33-year veteran in the education profession as a teacher and administrator, Wright serves as a member of the National Governor's Association Task Force on Graduation and Dropout Rates. She also is the chief deputy superintendent of public instruction with the Virginia Department of Education, appointed by Gov. Tim Kaine in 2006. ★





## a university life: A VCU ICON REFLECTS ON HER DISTINGUISHED CAREER

Meeting Grace E. Harris for the first time, her gentle voice belies a strong, confident demeanor that has served her well throughout her 40-year career at Virginia Commonwealth University. She has held positions as social work professor, dean of the School of Social Work and vice provost for continuing studies and public service. When Harris retired in 1999 as the provost and vice president for academic affairs, she had twice served as acting president of the university, in 1995 and 1998. Currently, she is a distinguished professor in the Center for Public Policy and head of the Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute.

Harris' many roles at VCU required determination and resolve, yet she carries herself with all the poise and dignity her name suggests. In December 2007, VCU dedicated the former School of Business building in her honor, a tribute that humbles her. "It's not just the name on the building, it's the recognition that I did make contributions," Harris says. But at the same time, she admits that "the name on the building is very nice. Very nice indeed."

Harris recently sat down to talk about her storied career.

How did your VCU career begin and how has it shaped who you've become? Elaine Rothenberg was the associate dean of the School of Social Work and I had known her through some community work. She recruited me to come and teach. The university seemed appealing and was something different.

I've often said that I didn't plan any of this. A lot of it happened because of opportunities that I decided to take advantage of. I think it's a willingness to try new things and a kind of spirit that I've always had of believing that it was OK to change and try new things.

What obstacles have you had to overcome over the course of your career? Making certain that the people with whom I worked respected my ability and my credentials and supported my goals. There were always people who *did* respect my goals and ambitions and supported me — not only within the university, but my family and friends and other professionals outside the university. I've had a very, very positive support system throughout my career that continues to this day.

What has been the biggest change to the university during your tenure? The growth in so many ways — not only physically, but in terms of programs and outreach in the community. Programmatically, we've seen many new interdisciplinary programs, the emphasis on life sciences and tremendous growth in international education. We've reached people from other parts of the state as well as other parts of the country who were not attending VCU when I first came here. It was very much a university that had local ties but had not expanded to the national and international level that it has today.

Is there one accomplishment that stands out in your career? As an administrator I've been able to work with so many people, especially faculty when I was provost. I believe the Office of the Provost really became a place where faculty and students could feel comfortable and talk about their issues, and that I had some impact on policies and procedures that made a difference in their lives.

The other piece of what I've done that I'm proud of has been involving others in helping define VCU as a university that is very much a part of the community. With Dr. Trani's leadership, I was able to support many of the initiatives he had in mind and played a role in making sure that faculty, students, community representatives and other administrators were involved in the process.

What would you like your legacy to be? Commitment to education, to service, a belief in those things as values. A commitment to sharing one's knowledge with others, and a willingness to explore new ways of thinking and doing things.

As a teacher and administrator, I always thought it was important to make sure we provide the best educational experience for the students. The building is certainly symbolic of that in the sense that it is a building for teaching and learning. And I taught in that building. That's nice to remember.

*Interview conducted by Erin Egan, a contributing writer for Shafer Court Connections.*





# A 'unique individual,' **BYRD** Theatre looks forward to another 80 years

by Polly Roberts

In a time when "new" means better and strip mall stores come and go as quickly as the next Starbucks arrives, Carytown's historic Byrd Theatre still finds its seats full, an organist playing the Wurlitzer on Saturday nights and an eclectic crowd taking in an affordable show.

As the vintage movie palace nears its 80th birthday in December, Richmonders continue to embrace the Byrd's unique character and French Empire-inspired décor — not to mention its discount \$1.99 features.

Like many Richmond couples, **Philip Perrine** (B.F.A. '93/A) and his girlfriend often frequent the Byrd Theatre on date night. But unlike the occasional moviegoer, they've seen a movie at the Byrd nearly every week for 10 years and counting.

"The Byrd is a real treat," Perrine says. "It's not just inexpensive entertainment. It's a trip back in time. There is no substitute for style, and the Byrd has it in spades."

It also invokes a sense of nostalgia for those who have grown up at the Byrd Theatre.

"People that remember being taken to the Byrd as a child can later go back when they start dating, and later on when they have kids of their own," says Todd Schall-Vess, the Byrd's general manager. "People come full circle — three to four generations."

Countless couples tell Schall-Vess that the Byrd has served as the milestone for each step of their relationship: the first date, the proposal and for some — including at least two in 2008 — the wedding.

"It's sort of like the Byrd has been part of their whole life," he says.

No doubt that many of those couples include Virginia Commonwealth University students, who Schall-Vess says bring a youthful energy to the Byrd.

"Because of our proximity to VCU, we've always had an important relationship with the university," he says. "It became more formal when we became home of the French Film Festival."

Recognized as the largest French film festival in the country, the three-day event — founded in 1993 — brought more than 20,000 patrons to the Byrd this past March.

"The French delegation always raves about what an elegant venue it is," says **Jennifer Gore** (B.A. '97 /H&S), assistant director of the VCU French Film Festival. "For some directors, their films have their North American premiere at the Byrd, so they're thrilled for it to be in such a beautiful theater."

The Byrd continues to expand its offerings — hosting concerts, comedians and other film festivals — as well as its role

in the community. It has already staked its claim in one of Richmond's newest traditions, Carytown's New Year's Eve, by serving as the location where the ball rises before a crowd of more than 3,000 revelers.

"We like to think that we're right at the heart of everything that happens in Richmond," Schall-Vess says.

For many people, the Byrd Theatre is. Although Perrine recently moved from the Carytown area, he returns each week for a visit to the Byrd.

"That's a habit I'm not willing to give up," he says. "The Byrd is my hometown theater. It is a fixture in my life."

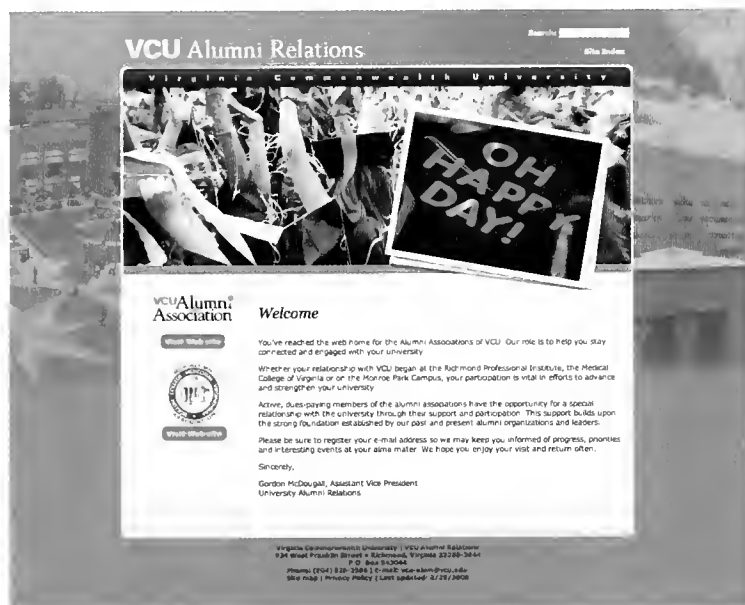
As a fixture in Richmond, the Byrd has proved its mass appeal to generation after generation. And while it may join the masses for an annual party or put on a concert or two, its primary role remains the same.

"We want to be a vintage movie theater that gives a sampling of other things," Schall-Vess says. "It's difficult to be an independent movie theater in a business that's ruled by change. But it's possible because the Byrd is such a unique individual."

*Polly Roberts is a contributing writer for Shafer Court Connections.*

# Alumni Connections

News, highlights and event photos from the Virginia Commonwealth University Alumni Association and the African-American Alumni Council.



## Alumni associations launch new Web site

Have you seen the new Web site for the VCU Alumni Association and the MCV Alumni Association of VCU?

Go to [www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org) and check out the latest news and information about your alma mater. The new site features:

- A career center.
- Calendar of events, online membership and event registration.
- Alumni magazines.
- University and alumni association news and information.
- Popular links.

Currently, the site is available to all users with no registration process. Some features will be added soon, including a searchable alumni directory, permanent e-mail forwarding, a business card exchange, personal Web pages and social networking. After June 30, 2008, the site will be restricted to registered users only, with some features — including the career center and online directory — available only to active dues-paying members.

## Thousands take part in alumni survey

More than 4,000 VCU alumni made their voices heard by completing our recent alumni survey. We are poring over the results to determine how we can adapt the VCU Alumni Association to better meet your needs and expectations. We will share the results with you soon.

In the meantime, if you'd like to offer additional feedback, we'd love to hear from you! E-mail [vcu-alum@vcu.edu](mailto:vcu-alum@vcu.edu).

## Board member makes UK connections

Last fall, VCU Alumni Association Board member **Patricia Green** (M.S.W. '74/SW) traveled to Kent, England, home of the British Committee for Jamestown 2007. Her aim was to strengthen VCU's profile abroad, particularly in the United Kingdom, where VCU already enjoys a strong alumni presence.

"Kent, England, is much more than a community with architectural reminders of Jamestown and Williamsburg. It is also the home of the British Committee for Jamestown 2007 and the burial site for Virginia's Pocahontas," Green says. "Just as important, VCU has an 'ambassador' in Kent, Alex King."

During her visit, Green met with King, deputy leader of the Kent County Council and chairman of the Jamestown UK Foundation Ltd., to discuss a unique academic partnership. Plans are under way to form an alliance between the University of Kent and the VCU School of Social Work, and King is integral to this development.

His office arranged for Green to meet with alumnus **Jonathan Fish** (B.S. '93/B) while in the U.K. Fish has fond memories of VCU and his Richmond stay, including a summer internship at McGuireWoods. He is now a successful technology investor and strategy consultant in London.

"Making connections with alumni across the pond broadens the university's reach and creates a unique opportunity to solidify its mission globally," Green says.



VCU Alumni Association board member Patricia Green meets with VCU alumnus Jonathan Fish while in the U.K. to pursue an academic partnership with the University of Kent.

## Calling all APB members

Did you serve on the Activities Programming Board as a student? If so, we'd like to get your input as VCU moves forward in planning future celebrations and special events. Please e-mail Cynthia Schmidt, director of University Marketing, at [caschmid@vcu.edu](mailto:caschmid@vcu.edu).

## Emeriti group takes shape

More than 60 alumni and friends attended the Oct. 12, 2007, VCU Alumni Association Emeriti Directors Reception at the Scott House.

Alumni who have served as members of the board of directors of either the Richmond Professional Institute or the VCU alumni associations were invited to join this new group of emeriti directors and asked to return to campus to hear remarks and a university update from VCU



Former VCU Alumni Association Board member Gale Crowder (B.S.G. '86/H&S), Ernest Evans and wife, Peggy Adams (B.S.G. '87/H&S), and Ben Brown (B.S. '75/B, M.S. '76/B) enjoy the Emeriti Directors Reception.

## VCUAA emeriti directors

Peggy C. Adams	James C. Lester
Peter H. Aiken, Ph.D.	Robert Lindholm
Beth W. Ayers	M. Kenneth Magill, Ph.D.
Kathleen B. Barrett	Connie E. McHale
Sally L. Bowring	Thomas L. Mountcastle
David B. Bradley	Carol O. Negus
B.Y. Brown	Dick Nelson
Marika L. Byrd	David S. Norris
Edward G. Canada Jr.	Jan R. Parrish
Rejena G. Carreras	Sharon E. Peterson
Linnie S. Carter	Timothy S. Pfohl
Ann Chenoweth	Thomas E. Phillips Jr.
Donna E. Coghill	Joan F. Rexinger
Claire A. Collins	John G. Slaughter
John R. Cook	Anthony E. Smith
O. William Coon III	E. Garrison Steffey Jr.
Gale Lee Crowder	J. Southall Stone
William L. Davis	Jacqueline T. Thornton
Sherran E. Deems	Susan M. Trulove
Randolph D. Eley Jr.	Bruce A. Twyman
Frederick D. Facka	Linda B. Vines
Eleanor Rumae Foddrell	Jean von Schilling, Ph.D.
Marilyn Garlick	Michael L. Wade
William M. Ginther	Dana R. Ward
Robert E. Henley Jr.	Linda M. Warren
Andrew C. Hulcher	Norman P. Wash
Mary-Ellen A. Kendall	Michael D. Whitlow
Hugh D. Keogh	Robert Paul Wiedemer
Thomas R. King Jr.	Jerome L. Williams
Thomas B. Lawrence	Charles H. Wood
Juanita B. Leatherberry	William H. Young IV



Richard Patrick Proffitt (right), recipient of the Legacy Scholarship, with his parents, Pamela and Richard.

## VCUAA taps legacy scholar

Richard Patrick Proffitt, a 15-year-old first-year engineering student from Richmond, Va., received the inaugural VCU Alumni Association Legacy Scholarship, a \$1,000 award, which will be given to two students annually.

Proffitt was home-schooled, completed 27 semester hours of dual-enrollment credit at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and then followed in the footsteps of his sister Kate, a Goldwater Scholar, to enter the VCU School of Engineering in the fall of 2007.

Proffitt is the son of alumni **Pamela Proffitt** (B.S. '71/H&S; M.Ed. '79/E) and **Richard Fowler** (M.B.A. '78/B). Both parents became lifetime members of the VCU Alumni Association in January 2005.

The Legacy Scholarship is available to the dependents of active, dues-paying members of the VCU Alumni Association. For an application or additional information, visit [www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org) and click on "Join" and then "Benefits."

## Fete welcomes awardees

The VCU Alumni Association hosted an Oct. 13, 2007, barbecue for more than 130 students and parents during VCU's Fall Fest.

Freshman recipients of presidential, provost and dean's scholarships and their parents, as well as alumni parents and their currently enrolled students, attended the event.

VCUAA President **Dan Massey** (B.S. '92/B) welcomed the crowd, and board members **Donna Dalton** (M.Ed. '00/E), **Stephanie Holt** (B.S. '74/E), **David Dennier** (B.S. '75/B), **Peter Blake** (B.A. '80/H&S; M.S. '88/MC) and **Shirley McDaniel** (B.G.S. '99/H&S) spoke about the importance of remaining involved with VCU after graduation.

## Fans rally at 'Hoops' event

The VCU Alumni Association "Hoops" event, held Feb. 2 during the weeklong homecoming celebration, drew more than 300 attendees. Pre-game fun included best-dressed fan and trivia contests plus appearances by Rodney the Ram, the VCU cheerleaders and the dance team. Athletic Director Norwood Teague



The 'Hoops' event draws spirit-clad Rams fans.

pumped up the crowd as they headed into the Alltel Pavilion at the Stuart C. Siegel Center, where the Rams shut out Towson in a 65-42 win before a crowd of 7,590.

## VCU fans show their Rams spirit at pre-game receptions

Rams fans turned out in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads to cheer on the men's basketball team in their run for the Colonial Athletic Association championship title.

Alumni joined the VCU Hampton Roads Area Alumni Chapter Jan. 19 at the Ted Constant Convocation Center in Norfolk, Va., for pre-game and halftime events, as the VCU Rams took on state rival Old Dominion University Monarchs. Junior Eric Maynor and senior Jamal Shuler combined for 52 points and VCU silenced a sold-out Constant Center crowd of 8,424

with a stunning early run on the way to a 78-68 victory — the Rams' first in Norfolk since 2004.

On Jan. 29, the VCU D.C. Metro Area Alumni Chapter hosted a pre-game social at Brion's Grille in Fairfax, Va., before the VCU Rams took on the George Mason University Patriots. The game was billed as an opportunity for the Rams to separate themselves from GMU; however, GMU, the CAA preseason No. 1 pick, used a 20-4 burst midway through the second half to take control, winning the game, 63-51.



### Graduation celebration

Graduates celebrated their achievements with family and friends at the winter 2007 Commencement breakfast. The event, sponsored and staffed by members of the VCU Alumni Association, was held Dec. 9, 2007, at the University Student Commons.

## RPI alumni dedicate sculpture at reunion



Charles Ponticello

In April, at the Richmond Professional Institute reunion, alumni gathered to dedicate "Tableith," an RPI commemorative sculpture being built to the west of Ginter House.

Created by artist Charles Ponticello (M.F.A. '94/A), the sculpture consists of 51 cast discs — each representing a year in RPI's life — stacked atop one another and spiraling upward.

"This has been quite the collaborative effort," Ponticello says. "RPI alumni spent several months gathering specific material required for this work of art. Each corresponding disc is inscribed with information that highlights achievements, events and hallmarks in RPI's history."

"The sculptural aspect embodies numerous potential meanings. The text adds intrigue and coloration from a distance. ... The viewer finds an abundance of information referencing the historic past of RPI."

RPI alumni raised \$40,000 to build and install the monument, and many alumni honored former faculty members with their donations.

- **Kathleen Burke Barrett** (B.S. '71/B; M.S. '73/B): "Dr. Colin Bushway inspired my interest in international business affairs and I will remember him always."
- **B. Forace Hill** (B.S. '60/H&S; M.S. '70/AHP): "Lois Washer was a wonderful adviser and had a great influence on many students who passed through her door."
- **Martha Coleman Myers** (B.A. '46/A): "I owe to [Dr. Alice Davis] the path I have taken in life. She was supportive and encouraged not just in words, but in character and action."
- **Alice Newman Murphy** (B.F.A. '55/A): "Hazel Mundy was an enthusiastic teacher who exuded confidence and passed it on to all her students gladly. To be in her fashion class was exciting."
- **Ashlin Wyatt Smith** (B.F.A. '55/A; M.F.A. '60/A): "Theresa Pollak was my guiding light and greatest critic in my graduate studies in the School of Arts at RPI."

## RPI sculpture donors

Barry and Elaine Ackman  
David Alexick  
Shirley Arrington  
Gwynn Epps August  
Bedros Bandazian  
Edgar Barnhill  
Kathleen Barrett  
June Bass  
Frances Beringer  
William O. and Sarah Beville  
Jean B. Biscoe  
Arlene Blaha  
Ben Henry  
Blankenship Jr.  
Charles Boardman  
Henry Boshen  
Betty Bowles  
John E. Bowles  
Bobby Buchanan

Lawrence Bussard  
Anne S. Butler  
Mary Grace Cain  
Mary Catherine Calvert  
Rejena Carreras  
Hilton E. Carter  
Maureen Cassada  
Edward W. Coffman  
W.E. Cross Jr.  
Jo Lynne DeMary  
Marie Dimatties  
W. Lester Duty  
James T. Francis  
Harry B.F. Franklin  
Jeanne Frayser  
Jeanne A. Gill  
Harmon Gordon  
Joan Gossage  
Gail Grandis  
Gretchen Grimaud

Geri Jones Grindle  
Nancy and W. Roy Grizzard  
Robert L. Groves  
Janice Haag  
John T. Hardy Jr.  
Dennis Heaster  
B. Forace Hill  
Robert Hill  
Stephanie Holt  
Eugene Hunt  
Inge Windmueller  
Hurowitz  
Shelly Benhein Janus  
Barbara Jones  
John William Jordan  
John D. Lambert  
Ann K. Leake  
James C. and Katherine Lester

Bernard Levey  
Robert F. and Lois Gustkey Lindholm  
William W. Little  
Earl Locklear  
Betsy Lottman  
H. Joseph Lowenthal  
Kenneth and Cheri Magill  
Mary Lee Maiden  
Frances S. Mallon  
William McCracken  
John McLean  
Robert Meacham  
Alice C. Newman Murphy  
Martha Coleman Myers  
Carol Negus  
William Charles Nelson  
Dave Norris

William R. O'Connell Jr.  
Raymond Pace  
Ambrose Parker  
John L. Patterson  
Eugene Payne  
Edward Peebles  
Elizabeth Pendleton  
Ann L. Perkins  
Ronald and Mary Petricka  
Gardner Phillips  
Barbara Cox Polen  
Anthony Puncinelli  
Richard C. Ramsburg  
E. Harris Reade  
Mary Jane Sale  
Mary G. Saunders  
John Jay Schwartz  
Arlene M. Shafer  
Norma Simpson

Ashlin Wyatt Smith  
George Stone  
Alice Taylor  
Grace Walker Taylor  
Rosemary Tennant  
Gene Monahan Thomas  
Sam Treger  
Margaret Uberti  
Susie Van Pool  
Thomas W. Walton  
Norman Wash  
Fred Wayne  
G. Harrison Whitten  
Marsden Williams  
Peggy Fowler Williams  
McCauley F. Willis  
Mary and John Wilson  
Nancy Witt  
Elizabeth Wright



# It's a great time to be a member!



**Membership in the VCU Alumni Association promotes a lifelong connection to VCU and offers a long list of benefits:**

- Yearly subscription to Shafer Court Connections.
- Low-cost Internet service through [online@VCU](mailto:online@VCU), VCU's hardware and software store.
- Alumni association window decal and membership card.
- Nationwide car and hotel discounts.
- International auto, hotel and air reservation service.
- Annual VCU Recreational Sports membership including use of university gyms and pools, equipment rentals and Outdoor Adventure Program trips (reduced fee).
- Playing privileges for the Thalhimer tennis courts.
- Opportunities to network with alumni at association-sponsored events.
- Discount on VCU merchandise at campus bookstores.
- Discount on tickets to VCU Athletics home events.
- Discount on event or meeting space rentals in the Richard T. Robertson Alumni House (life members only).
- Discounts on alumni association-sponsored events.
- VCU Alumni Association MasterCard.
- Participation in chapters.
- Group rates on medical insurance, life insurance and long-term care insurance.
- Customized VCU apparel.

**Start your annual membership in the VCU Alumni Association or African-American Alumni Council (includes VCUSA membership) today for just \$35, or think big with a lifetime membership for \$350 (payment plans available). VCUSA and AAAC membership dues help support the alumni associations, which are funded by private donations.**

**Renew or join for life. [www.vcu.edu](http://www.vcu.edu)**

**VCU**

| Virginia Commonwealth University

# Class notes

Send information about your professional and personal accomplishments to [shafercourt@vcu.edu](mailto:shafercourt@vcu.edu). Or, mail your news to Shafer Court Connections, Virginia Commonwealth University, 827 W. Franklin St., P.O. Box 842041, Richmond, VA 23284-2041.

## Updates

### 1960s

**Donald Blake** (B.S. '68/E), president of Blake Management Group in Richmond, Va., was reappointed to a second four-year term on the J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College board and a second three-year term on the Family Foundation of Virginia board.

**Robin Eddy** (B.S. '67/E), marketing coordinator at Clarke County High School and career and technical administrator for Clarke County Public Schools, has been named to The Barns of Rose Hill Board of Directors.

**Charles Wood** (B.S. '64/B) lives in Lake Wylie, S.C., where he works as general manager of Anchor Self Storage.

### 1970s

**Lyne Cannoy** (B.F.A. '72/A) authored and chaired the 10th anniversary exhibit of the Pittsburgh Society of Illustrators, honoring the city's 250th anniversary.

**Stephen G. Carroll, CPA\*** (B.S. '79/B) is a partner at Harris, Hardy and Johnstone P.C. in Richmond, Va., and serves on the School of Business Alumni Board.

**Don Goff** (B.S. '77/H&S) received his M.S. in Management from Albertus Magnus College in 2002 and is assistant director at Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo in Bridgeport.

**Stephen Hill\*** (B.F.A. '79/A) lives in Manassas, Va., and is a visual information specialist for the Marine Corps.

**Rob Hunter** (B.S. '78/H&S), editor of "Ceramics in America," was inducted as a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

**William E. Johnson** (B.S. '75/B) is director of finance for the city of Colonial Heights, Va.

**Jody L. Korman** (B.S. '79/B), an associate broker with ReMax Commonwealth in Richmond, Va., earned the professional designation of Certified Residential Specialist.

**Elizabeth Lankes** (B.F.A. '76/A) is the art director for ASIS International and received an award from the Washington Metropolitan Art Director's Club for a layout in the ASIS magazine, Security Management.

**Marcus Rediker, Ph.D.\*** (B.A. '77/H&S) published "The Slave Ship: A Human History" in October 2007.

**Christine Saum** (B.F.A. '79/A) is a 2008 Loeb Fellow at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

**Robert T. Sparkman** (B.S. '76/B) lives in Montclair, Va., where he works for the NAVSEA Headquarters Fast Attack and Trident Nuclear Submarine Program Office.

**Mary Skudlarek Sudzina, Ph.D.\*** (B.S. '70/E) was promoted to professor emerita of education psychology at the University of Dayton.

**Alice Talmadge\*** (B.S. '75/MC) is a business systems specialist with Dominion Resources Services.

**Howard Taylor\*** (B.S. '78/H&S) retired in April 2007 after 28 years serving as a criminal justice practitioner.

**George W. Thomas** (M.S. '75/B) received his D.Min. in Leadership at Liberty University in December 2007. He is currently an associate pastor and lives in Chesapeake, Va.

**Bill Warren** (B.S. '78/MC) is vice president of public affairs for Walt Disney Corp.

## Spotlight

**SETTING THE STAGE.** Though he won't be seen on the big screen, **Jeremy Conway** (B.F.A. '78/A) plays a pivotal role in the much anticipated "Sex and the City: The Movie," which hits theaters this May.

"When I'm working on a movie, I'm doing all the stuff I want to do," says Conway, the movie's production designer.

Over the years, Conway has enjoyed a distinguished career of designing sets for theater, TV, movies and even the Olympic Games.

"I happened to be at the right place at the right time," he says of the opportunity to design sets for the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games. That experience led to a steady gig, with Conway designing sets for the following four summer and winter games.

His most recognizable job, however, was as production designer for the hit HBO series "Sex and the City."

Set in New York City, the cable show followed the lives of four women in the late 1990s and tackled many socially relevant issues not previously discussed on TV.

Conway designed many of the sets during the show's six seasons as well as the four main characters' apartments — focal points throughout the series. Now, he's bringing his New York City designs to the big screen and sharing his behind-the-scenes insights with VCU students.

In 2006, at the invitation of associate professor Elizabeth Hopper, Conway brought "Sex and the City" to VCU theater students through a master class.

"I met with a lot of students interested in design," he says. "Over the week, we broke down a typical script and they presented their ideas of how it should look — only in Richmond, Va."

The VCU Department of Theatre's "guest artists" program gives alumni the opportunity to share their real-world experiences with

students. In addition to deconstructing "Sex and the City" set designs, Conway spoke about how he got his start.

After graduation, Conway headed to New York City, working initially as a freelance art director. He's also served as the set designer and art director for "Late Night with David Letterman" and lent his creative talents to the movies "School of Rock," "Up Close and Personal" and "Jacob's Ladder." His designs for the NBC News Olympics studio earned him two Emmy awards, in 2000 and 2002, and he's received other Emmy nominations for his TV work.

Maybe "Sex and the City: The Movie" will earn him the next award to put on his shelf.



## 1980s

**Neal Azrolan** (B.S. '84/H&E) lives in Newtown, Pa., and is employed by Merck & Co. Inc., determining publication strategies and creating manuscripts for Merck's clinical trials of its HIV drug ISENTRESS.

**Rudolph Burwell\*** (B.S. '86/I.T.) has been promoted to colonel in the U.S. Army and will be working at the Pentagon as the chief of planning support for Army Public Affairs.

**Sergio R. Bustos\*** (B.S. '84/I.T.) published his first book, "Miami's Criminal Past – Uncovered," which he co-authored with a colleague at The Miami Herald.

**Kathy H. Catlett\*** (B.S. '88/B.Cert. in Bus.) is assistant vice president with Wachovia Insurance Services.

**Anthony Earles** (B.S. '87/H&E) is an evidence specialist with Maui's Criminal Investigation Division.

**William Flynn** (B.F.A. '84/I.), president and founder of Franklin Street Marketing, announced the opening of the company's new office – a 7,300-square-foot Baskerville-designed building in Richmond, Va.

**Ronnie Greene\*** (B.S. '86/I.C.), an urban affairs editor at The Miami Herald, is finishing his first book, "Night Fire: Big Oil, Poison Air, and One Woman's Fight to Save Her Town," which will be published this year.

**Tim Gresham\*** (B.S. '84/I.C.), president and CEO of Prevent Blindness Mid-Atlantic, was recently elected to the Powhatan County School Board in Powhatan, Va.

**Gail P. Hardy** (B.S. '87/H&E) was recently appointed Connecticut's first African-American state's attorney.

**Paul J. Hussar, Ph.D.** (B.S. '87/H&E) recently returned after two years serving as the regional security officer at the U.S. Embassy in Cotonou, Benin. He is currently assigned as a special agent at Diplomatic Security's world headquarters and lives in Spotsylvania, Va.

**Michael J. Kent** (B.S. '89/I.C.), solution content developer at Electronic Data Systems in Houston, recently achieved the first level of proposal management certification from the Association for Proposal Management Professionals.

**Jim 'Gusto' Mattocks\*** (M.S. '86/AHEP, I.T.P., '96/H&E) has retired from the Virginia Health Department and moved to Greensboro, N.C. He will receive a philosophy degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro this spring.

**Marcy McDonald\*** (B.F.A. '87/A) received her M.A. in English and American Studies, with a concentration in digital media, from the University of Virginia in 2005. She was recently promoted to director of academic content at The Teaching Co.

**Rhonda Patricia Keyes Pleasants** (B.S. '88/P) earned a Master of Disaster Science from the University of Richmond and was promoted to assistant professor at John Tyler Community College.

**Cindy Reagan** (B.S. '87/B) is senior lead software application developer for the Enterprise Information Systems project at Texas A&M University.

**Barbie Wilson Roundtree** (B.S. '87/E) is a program technician for The Improvement Association in Emporia, Va.

**Daniel Rudge\*** (I.T.P.P. '88/H&E) was recently named as the first manager of strategic planning for the Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

**Michael A. Scruggs** (B.S. '81/I.C., M.S. '87/H&E) directs the public sector division of Microsoft's U.S. Pursuit Services team and is in his second term as president of the National Capital Area Chapter of the Association of Proposal Management Professionals. He was awarded the Steven Shipley Award in June 2007 by the chapter.

**Benjamin D. Sillmon III\*** (B.S. '86/B) is a financial adviser with Mullins, Gordon, Norman and Hill Financial Consulting and Wealth Management of Wachovia Securities in Richmond, Va.

**PRODUCING CREATIVE COLLABORATIONS.** **Joseph Cortina** (B.F.A. '76/A) and **Jeffrey Blount** (B.S. '81/MC) graduated four years apart and with different degrees but found themselves in the same field – broadcast journalism – where they've been able to pool their respective talents.

After receiving his art degree, Cortina took a part-time film editor position at WTVR in Richmond, Va. Three years later, he headed for Washington, D.C., and landed a job at NBC News.

Blount narrowly missed working with Cortina when he got a job after graduation as a director at WTVR. Blount eventually made his way north to the nation's capital as well, getting a job at WRC, the NBC affiliate where Cortina worked.

"Joe and I became very good friends working at WRC," Blount says. "He was moving up the ladder and I was just starting out."

The pair first started working together on "Meet the Press," where Blount served as Cortina's associate director. When Cortina left NBC, Blount took over as director of the political newscast. He also currently directs "The Chris Matthews Show" and the Washington portions of "NBC Nightly News."

Soon after leaving NBC, Cortina started his own company, Cortina Productions, a media design firm that works in film, video, interactive exhibits and on the Web. When he had the opportunity to produce a media project for the Muhammad Ali Center in Louisville, Ky., Cortina called on Blount "to bring an eloquence to the story."

"He respects my outlook and recognizes that I can capture his vision in words," Blount says. "He pulled me in right from the beginning. I was passionate about Muhammad Ali and what he meant historically to the African-American community."

The Ali Center opened in 2005 and serves as a testimonial to Ali's life as a boxer and a humanitarian. Cortina produced, while Blount wrote the scripts for, more than 30 digital videos and a dozen interactive displays.

"It was the culmination of our professional friendship while strengthening our personal friendship," Blount says.

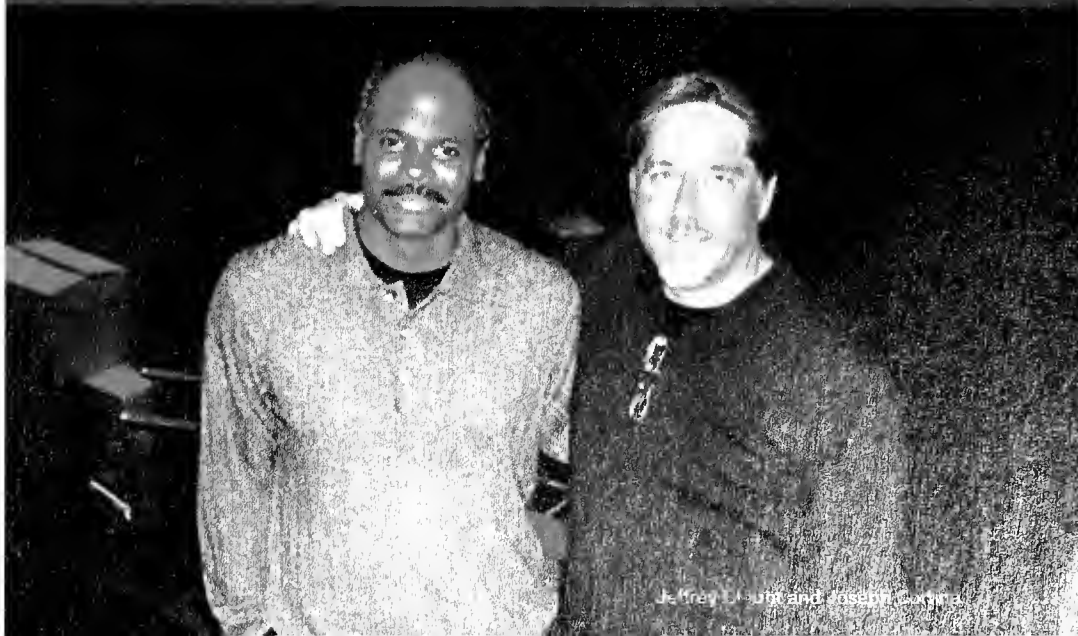
The duo's most recent collaboration involves writing a script for the "Newseum 4-D Experience," an interactive museum in Washington, D.C., dedicated to the history and technology of news reporting.

Who knows what the next project will be for the talented pair, but one thing they're sure of is that there will be plenty of opportunities to work together again.

"It is such a pleasure to collaborate with someone who is so creative and brings in other points of view," Cortina says.

Blount agrees.

"It is a huge help for me professionally to have these outside influences," he says. "I give him a reliable talent of writing and it is special to me that he looks to me for that."



Jeffrey Blount and Joseph Cortina

# VCU Alumni Association

## VCUAA officers

C. Dandridge Massey (B.S. '92/B), president  
Donna M. Dalton (M.Ed. '00/E), president-elect  
Patricia E. Green (M.S.W. '74/SW), secretary  
Kenneth "Ken" A. Thomas (B.S. '71/B), treasurer  
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## School alumni board chairs

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School of Engineering

## Board of Directors

### Term expiring 2008

Elizabeth J. Moran (M.P.A. '89/GPA)  
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### Term expiring 2009

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### Term expiring 2010

Rejane G. Carreras (B.F.A. '70/A; M.A.E.  
'70/A)  
William L. Davis (B.S. '74/E; M.S. '77/H&S)  
David R. Dennier (B.S. '75/B)  
Gary M. Inman (M.A. '73/A)  
Stephen H. Jones (B.S. '75/E)  
Shirley R. McDaniel (B.G.S. '92/H&S)  
Mary E. Perkinson (B.F.A. '91/A; B.S. '03/En)  
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Vickie M. Sneed (B.S. '76/E)

## African-American Alumni Council

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Rodney Harry (B.S. '90/H&S), parliamentarian  
Edward W. Linson Jr. (B.G.S. '90/H&S;  
M.S.W. '03/SW), VCUAA representative

## Young Alumni Council

Gaurav "G" Shrestha (B.S. '03/B)

Charles H. Smith (M.P.A. '81/H&S) is currently sailing aboard a Military Sealift Command replenishment ship as the third cargo mate, where he supervises flight deck operations during underway replenishment with Navy ships.

Michael Stock (B.S. '86/MC) is the area director for the Richmond/Capital Region of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

David A. Stosch, CPA (B.S. '82/B; M.Tax '84/B) is a principal at Stosch, Dacey & George P.C. and serves on the School of Business Alumni Board.

Mike Wade (B.S. '86/H&S; M.S. '90/AHP) was awarded Caron's Law Enforcement Professional Award for his efforts in fighting chemical and alcohol dependency through education, prevention and treatment.

Todd Woofenden (B.A. '86/H&S) is the author of "Hunters of the Steel Sharks: The Submarine Chasers of WWI," published in December 2006 by Signal Light Books.

## 1990s

Rebecca Shelton Askew (M.P.A. '94/H&S) lives in Chesterfield Co., Va., with her husband Rodney Askew (B.S. '93/E) and their two children. She is a senior policy analyst with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Lesley Howson Bruno (B.S. '99/MC) is director of communications at George Washington University's School of Education.

Susan Ciconte (B.S. '93/H&S) is employed by Hennepin County, Minn., where she determines eligibility for new and current public assistance clients.

Jennings D. Dawson III (B.S. '95/B) is chief financial officer of the MCV Foundation.

Evelyn Frasure (B.A. '97/H&S) recently earned an L.L.M. in Environmental Law at George Washington University and is serving as a major-select judge advocate at the U.S. Air Force's Environmental Law Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

James "Jim" Gleason (M.M. '95/A) lives with his wife, Dana, in Apalachin, N.Y., where he teaches music and serves as minister of music in a United Methodist church. He also recently performed as a tenor soloist with New York's "Basically Bach" ensemble and will play Thomas Jefferson in a 2008 performance of "1776."

Melody King\* (B.S. '93/B) is the controller for The Federal Club, an Arnold Palmer Signature golf course in Hanover County, Va. She is also southeast regional director for the American Society of Women Accountants and president of the local chapter for 2007-08.

Jennifer Lewis Kuchno (B.S. '93/H&S; M.T. '93/E) was selected as a 2007-08 Rotary Ambassadorial Cultural Scholar in Quito, Ecuador, where she is studying the Spanish language and Ecuadorian culture and serving as a bilingual translator.

Keith W. Laskey (B.A. '92/H&S) is a program executive at the UJA-Federation of New York.

Karen Belardo Lee (B.A. '94/H&S) lives in Frederick, Md., and is the educational outreach director with Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic.

James A. McGee\* (M.S. '96/H&S) recently retired from the FBI and is currently serving on the faculty in the University of Southern Mississippi School of Health's Department of Human Performance and Recreation, Center for Spectator Sport Security Management.

Brandi Hunter McKeating (B.S. '99/H&S) is employed by T. Rowe Price's Retirement Plan Services where she manages 401(k) client relationships.

Mark Moskal (B.S. '92/MC) lives in Seattle where he is employed as executive creative director at Ascentium.

David Renner (B.S. '97/H&S) is senior pastor at New Hope Community Baptist Church in Ashland, Va., and works in sales for Southern RV.

Prudence Roberts-Milligan (B.S. '94/MC; M.S. '00/MC) is a senior account executive at Pulsar Advertising in Richmond, Va.

Ramin Saadat\* (M.A. '94/A) is teaching in Yorba Linda, Calif.

Kelli Miller Stacy (B.S. '91/MC) is a freelance medical writer and editor in Atlanta and passed the certification exam for the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences in October 2007.

Kathy Lee Storie (B.S. '92/H&S) works for United Space Alliance, a prime contractor to NASA for the space shuttle and Ares programs.

Amy Strite (M.S.W. '90/SW) has been promoted to executive director of Children's Health Involving Parents of Greater Richmond.

Doug Sutton (B.F.A. '90/A) has launched MoveMyMom LLC, which arranges and project manages relocations to aid boomers with their parents' transitions.

Holly Womack Walker (B.S. '91/MC) is a PR and marketing specialist at John Tyler Community College.

Eric Williams (B.G.S. '95/H&S) was recently appointed director of the Multicultural Academic Opportunities Program at Virginia Tech.

## 2000s

Robert Washington Anderson (B.S. '03/MC), a photographer at WJLA-TV in Washington, D.C., was awarded a regional Emmy Award in June for his work on a weather story, "Our Newsroom is Flooding."

Kim Baranowski (M.F.A. '00/A) is participating in a two-month expedition to Antarctica to work with scientists and install sculptures.

Chris Beauregard\* (B.F.A. '05/A) will receive a master's degree from Carnegie Mellon University this spring.

Robert A. Blackwood IV (B.F.A. '02/A) is the manager of Bear Forge in Brevard, N.C.

Rachel Wine Buhse (B.S. '06/MC) is an assistant PR specialist with VCU Health System.

Tami F. Carsillo (M.T. '04/E) is a legislative education and development media specialist for the Virginia House of Delegates.

Rochelle Y. Clarke (B.S. '00/B) is the director of information systems technology for VCU.

Janet L. Clements (M.Ed. '00/E), chief deputy coordinator of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, has been appointed to the Virginia Public Safety Memorial Commission.

Angela Erale (B.S. '04/MC) is a first lieutenant and communications platoon leader in the U.S. Army and was recently deployed to Iraq.

Lisa Figueroa (B.S. '07/MC) is a senior producer with VCU TV/HD.

Christian K. Finkbeiner (B.S. '01/MC) is employed as a copy editor and page designer at The Progress-Index in Petersburg, Va.

Louis Florio\* (M.S. '04/H&S) has been called as pastor to Messiah Lutheran Church in Mechanicsville, Va.

Stuart Glaser (B.S. '04/B) is a project manager for DATAlegro Inc.

Dan Grazier (B.S. '00/MC) is a first lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps and recently served in Iraq.



**Toni D. Green** (B.A. '05/H&S) is pursuing a master's degree in education, with a concentration in curriculum and instruction, while teaching for Henrico County Public Schools.

**Jovan M. Hackley** (B.S. '05/IE) is employed by the Virginia Association of Realtors as a marketing manager.

**Altimese Hamlin** (B.S. '06/IE) is employed as a payroll specialist at Paychex in Georgia.

**Brent Harrison** (B.S. '04/MC) is a corporate communications manager at Surgical Information Systems in Atlanta.

**Jennifer Henson** (B.A. '02/H&S) graduated from the Wake Forest University School of Law in 2007 and is working for Anderson, Jones and Gengo as an associate in their personal injury and real estate sections.

**Steve Hertzler** (B.S. '06/En) is a patent attorney with Nixon Peabody LLP in Washington, D.C.

**Travis A. Holmes** (B.S. '06/H&S) graduated from the U.S. Coast Guard Recruit Training Center in Cape May, N.J.

**Jeremy Hughes** (B.S. '06/B) is president of Hughes Logsdon Contracting Group Inc., in Arlington, Va.

**Jeremy L. Jones** (B.S. '07/B) lives in Houston where he works in higher education and is working on two book projects to be released in 2008.

**LaToya Jones** (B.S. '03/B) is senior external QC specialist for Bostwick Laboratories in Glen Allen, Va.

**Demetrios J. Melis** (B.S. '05/H&S, ITPA '05/A-P4) was promoted to assistant director of investigations with the Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation, where he oversees the Northern Virginia Field Division.

**Derek Meyer** (B.S. '07/IE) was selected to produce a 50-second film as a finalist for the Coca-Cola Refreshing Filmmaker's Award. He is pursuing an M.F.A. in filmmaking at Florida State University.

**Matthew Ryan Murphy** (B.S. '06/B) is a manufacturer's representative with S.E. Burks Sales Co. in Richmond, Va.

**Tim Niemczyk** (B.S. '05/En) is a senior systems engineer with Technology Management Group in King George, Va.

**Leslie Orebaugh** (B.S. '06/H&S) is a forensic scientist trainee with the Virginia Department of Forensic

Science. Upon completion of the training program in May 2008, she will be a forensic biology examiner.

**Christina Powell** (B.S. '06/IE) is employed as a production designer for RTC Relationship Marketing in Washington, D.C.

**Margaret Rogliano** (B.S. '06/IE) is a recruiter for LandAmerica Financial Group in Richmond, Va.

**Katie Hertel Sanner** (B.S. '06/IE) received the Rising Star Award from the D.C. chapter of Society of Marketing Professional Services.

**Tuana Z. Smith** (B.S. '06/En) is an Army knowledge leader intern in management specialist with the Department of the Army in Arlington, Va.

**Jahn Torres** (B.S. '06/En) is a mechanical design engineer at Sensata Technologies Inc. in Massachusetts.

**Travis Townsend** (M.F.A. '06/FA) received third place recognition in the National Young Sculptors Competition. Townsend has also been accepted into a two-person exhibit at Second Street Gallery in October 2008 and a solo show at the Southwest School of Art and Craft in San Antonio, Texas.

## Spotlight

**BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS.** Lifetime athlete **Kristen Lessig** (B.S. '05/E) and physical education teacher **Jenni Yocco** (B.S. '05/E) share a love of sports and a commitment to bringing their passion to everyone around them.

Together they founded Sportable, a nonprofit organization focused on providing recreation and sports opportunities for individuals with physical disabilities in the Greater Richmond area.

"We feel like everybody should have the right to play sports," Yocco says. "We're charged with putting activities out there and doing whatever we can to make people aware of who we are."

Lessig and Yocco research how to modify sports and bring in coaches when necessary. Through Sportable, they offer biweekly clinics in power wheelchair soccer, tennis and basketball, as well as organize other recreational outings including kayaking, skiing and rock climbing.

"You learn a lot when you participate in sports," says Lessig, who works full time as a therapeutic recreation specialist in the spinal cord injury unit at the Hunter Holmes McGuire Veterans Affairs Medical Center. "That's what is most beneficial in the long run — cooperative communication and socialization."

In addition to her job as a P.E. teacher, Yocco also works part time as a recreational therapist at Poplar Springs Hospital. But she found a common thread with Lessig when, as VCU students, they attended a March 2005 therapeutic recreation conference that showed them the possibilities of adaptive sports and recreation.

The idea for Sportable was born.

"We thought, 'We have to bring this to Richmond,'" Lessig says.

Eight months later, they hosted Sportable's first clinic. Today, Sportable enjoys 65 members ages 5 and older.

"This opens up a door for them," Lessig says. "The goal is for independence. Activity changes their lives."

Yocco recalls the transformation of one middle school student with muscular dystrophy who began playing power soccer through Sportable.

"In gym class, he was able to get out of his chair but he wasn't into sports," she says. "Now he's a star on the court. He's awesome at it and his self-esteem rose. Finding his niche is what he needed."

Local athletes view Sportable as the go-to source for adaptive sports and recreation. Thanks to their requests, the organization plans to introduce quad rugby, fencing and sled hockey in 2009.

Lessig and Yocco also dream of sending a team to the Paralympics one day.

"We all have the innate desire to compete," Lessig says. "There's a misconception that people with disabilities don't want to and, often times, they just get the medal for participating. But in Sportable, they find someone they're competitive with who has that instinct, too. That's what it's really all about."

To learn more about Sportable, or to support the organization or one of its athletes, visit [www.sportable.org](http://www.sportable.org).



## Did you know?

Virginia Commonwealth University counts among its alumni a superior court judge, bestselling authors and on- and off-screen TV talents. Here's a look at a few of the university's notable graduates.

**David Baldacci** (B.A. '83/H&S), author of "Absolute Power," "The Collectors," "Simple Genius" and numerous other New York Times bestsellers.

**Jay Fitzgerald** (B.S. '75/E), international swimming coach and Olympic trainer.

**Stephen Furst** (B.F.A. '76/A), TV producer and actor, whose well-known characters include Flounder from the hit comedy classic "National Lampoon's Animal House," Dr. Elliot Axelrod in the long-running TV drama "St. Elsewhere" and Vir in the Warner Bros. science-fiction hit "Babylon 5."

**Anita M. Josey-Herring** (B.A. '82/H&S), associate judge, Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

**Sheri Reynolds** (M.F.A. '82/H&S), author of four critically acclaimed novels, including "Rapture of Canaan," which was selected by Oprah Winfrey for her book club.

**Thomas E. Robbins** (B.S. '57/MC), author of "Even Cowgirls Get the Blues," "Another Roadside Attraction" and other underground classics.

**Richard T. Robertson** (B.A. '87/E), senior advisor to the Warner Bros. Television Group.

**Gay Donna Vandergriff\*** (M.B.A. '02/B) is a marketing professor at the Henric Campus of Strayer University.

**Lindsey Ward** (B.S. '06/MC) is a news reporter at WCAV in Charlottesville, Va.

**Donna-Jo Webster\*** (B.S. '06/MC) was named branch manager of the Cochrane-Rockville Library, in Rockville, Va.

**Adam Welch** (M.F.A. '03/A) is assistant director at Greenwich House Pottery in New York.

**Adam Whitney** (B.F.A. '06/A) is the metals coordinator at Penland School of Crafts.

**Kendra Williams-Giles** (B.S. '00/B) is the human resources manager for a nonprofit credit union in Northern Virginia.

**Nathan Winslow** (B.S. '01/En) has published four patents and works for Biomet Inc. in Indiana.

**Karmen Yu** (B.S. '01/En) is a project manager at Capital One in Richmond, Va.

## Faculty and staff

**Dan Currier** (M.F.A. '07/A), a photography and film adjunct professor at VCU, was interviewed on National Public Radio with David Brancaccio about his thesis film, "Labeled," which focuses on the North Carolina Eugenics program of the 1950s.

**Tyler Darden**, a communication arts faculty member, was awarded the Gold Medal for Art Direction by the New York Society of Illustrators in 2007 and 2008.

**Susie Ganch** will have her work featured in the Japan Jewelry Biennial.

**Sonali Gulati**, an assistant professor in VCU's photography and film department, has been accepted to screen her film, "24 frames per day," at the Slamdance Film Festival in Park City, Utah.

**Arthur Hash** is showing in the Society of Arts and Crafts exhibit, "From Minimal to Bling: Contemporary Studio Jewelry," in Boston and is slated for a solo show at the Shelbourne Museum in June/July 2008. His work was also featured in "500 Brooches," published by Lark Books, and in an advertisement for the Sienna Gallery in American Craft magazine.

**Tarne Kendell Hudson**, an adjunct instructor in the School of Education, competed in the 11th annual World Championships of Performing Arts in Los Angeles. She won gold medals in spokesmodeling and comic acting; silver medals in classical acting, Broad-

way singing and variety singing; and bronze medals in country singing and an open vocal category.

**Sterling Hundley** (B.F.A. '98/A), a faculty member in the communication arts department, received two gold medals from the New York Society of Illustrators in 2008.

**Todd Raviotta** (B.F.A. '01/A; M.F.A. '04/A), a photography and film adjunct professor at VCU, has been selected to present his film, "At the River," at the Outfest Film Festival 25th Anniversary Program.

**Jack Wax's** "Surviving on the Quality of Listening" was selected as a finalist in the Bombay Sapphire Prize 2008, the world's largest annual award for artists, designers and architects working with glass.

## Weddings

### 2000s

**Gerty Fernandez** (B.S. '03/En) and **Shawn Johnson** (B.S. '02/En) were married in December 2006 and currently reside in Washington, D.C. Fernandez is employed as a mechanical engineer at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and Johnson is an electrical engineer with the Department of Defense.

**Allison Varmer** (B.S. '04/En) and **Alex Vaughan** were married in November 2006. Varmer is a process engineer in the Innovation Center at DuPont Teijin Films.

## Births

### 1980s

**Loney G. Nunemaker Jr.\*** (B.S. '84/MC) and his wife, Olga, welcomed their second child, Emily Claire, in May.

**Sandra Parker** (B.S. '89/MC) gave birth to a baby boy, Parker Michael Sancilio, in May.

### 1990s

**Aimee T.H. Kessler\*** (B.A. '96/H&S) welcomed the birth of her first child, Leia Eden Rose, in February 2007.

**Mary Beth Joachim Long** (B.S. '91/MC) and her husband welcomed their first child, Ada Hilliard, on Aug. 1, 2007.

**Cindy (Shaub) Murray\*** (B.S. '95/H&S) gave birth to a daughter, Grace Anne, on July 23, 2007. She lives in Locust Grove, Va. with her husband, **Pete Murray** (B.A. '95/H&S).

### 2000s

**Christel Spiers Laxton** (B.S. '04/En) and her husband, Larry, welcomed a son, Liam Eli, in March 2006.

## Obituaries

### 1940s

**Elizabeth C. Mitchell** (B.F.A. '42/A), of Lynchburg, Va., April 29, 2007.

**Jeane Boehling O'Brien** (48/SW), of Richmond, Va., May 30, 2007, at age 80.

### 1950s

**John R. Booth** (Cert. '50/B; B.S. '52/B), of Petersburg, Va., Jan. 7, 2008, at age 80.

**John Joseph Erdman\*** (B.S. '59/B), June 29, 2007, at age 73. He retired from AMF in 1989, where he worked in human resources, specializing in labor negotiations.

**William R. Gaines** (B.F.A. '50/A), of Cape Canaveral, Fla., Oct. 21, 2007, at age 80.

**Oscar S. Hastings Jr.**, (B.S. '52/B), of Midlothian, Va., Nov. 22, 2007.

**William F. Heywood** (B.F.A. '52/A), of Richmond, Va., March 9, 2007, at age 79.

## Planned giving

**RECOGNIZING ESTATE DONORS.** Virginia Commonwealth University is fortunate to have many generous and loyal alumni and friends. Gifts from our donors profoundly affect the university, our students and our faculty.

The VCU Heritage Society is a special group of alumni and friends who have included VCU in their estate plans. These gifts include charitable remainder trusts, charitable gift annuities, charitable lead trusts, life insurance and bequests.

Members of the society have the opportunity to share in the university's success through special publications and correspondence as well as invitations to presidential and campus events. Donors should speak with a tax advisor about the possibility of specific tax benefits.

For information on how you might make a bequest to VCU, please contact **Thomas Burke**, executive director of the VCU Foundation, at (804) 926-3958 or [tburke@vcu.edu](mailto:tburke@vcu.edu).

**Anne Wilson Houmes** (B.S. '55/H&S), of Richmond, Va., May 31, 2007, at age 81.

**Betty Moss** (Cert. '33/A), of Richmond, Va., Dec. 28, 2007.

**Ann B. Tubbs** (B.S. '51/SW), of Dutton, Va., Sept. 19, 2007, at age 85.

**James "Jim" Kirk Ward** (B.F.A. '55/A), of Trinity, N.C., June 30, 2007, at age 74. Averaging more than 20 points a game in the 1954 and 1955 seasons, Ward was a building block for VCU's basketball program.

**Fred Andrew Williams** (B.S. '57/E), of Richmond, Va., Dec. 31, 2007, at age 81. Williams had retired after more than 40 years serving the City of Richmond in a variety of positions, including bureau chief of recreation and acting director of recreation and parks.

## 1960s

**Christi Biswanger** (B.F.A. '68/A), of Cazenovia, N.Y., Jan. 12, 2007.

**William Edwin Clarke Sr.** (M.S.W. '60/SW), of Midlothian, Va., June 10, 2007, at age 85.

**William Howard Crone** (B.S. '65/B), of Richmond, Va., June 11, 2007, at age 69.

**Ralph H. Gardner** (B.S. '65/H&S), of Richmond, Va., June 21, 2007.

**Elizabeth Houseman** (B.S. '67/E; M.Ed. '78/E), Oct. 12, 2007, at age 75. She served as a sixth-grade teacher in Virginia's Hanover and Henrico counties for 28 years.

**Leah T. Robinson\*** (B.S. '63/H&S; M.S. '65/H&S; Ph.D. '74/H&S), of Virginia Beach, Va., Dec. 6, 2007, at age 79.

**Robert Hitter Shackelford Jr.** (B.S. '67/B; M.P.A. '91/H&S), of Newtown, Va., July 7, 2007, at age 61. He was a retired assistant commissioner for the Department of Mental Health and Retardation, as well as a part-time employee for the Virginia Department of Veterans Services and J.M. Fogg Farms.

**Rebecca M. Tarumoto** (B.S. '67/B), of Carmel by the Sea, Calif., Oct. 29, 2007, at age 62.

**Mary Rosalie West** (B.S. '67/E), of Richmond, Va., Jan. 8, 2008, at age 63.

## 1970s

**Kathryn Furgurson Atkins** (M.Ed. '78/E), of Richmond, Va., Jan. 10, 2008, at age 57.

**Leona L. Bailey** (M.Ed. '79/E), of Richmond, Va., April 8, 2007.

**Doris L. Bazzichi** (B.F.A. '74/A), of Richmond, Va., Oct. 3, 2007, at age 82.

**Thomas Head Clarke** (B.M.E. '71/A), July 1, 2007, at age 59. He served as choir director at both New Bridge and Black Creek Baptist churches.

**Evelyn P. Collins** (B.S. '79/H&S), of Emporia, Va., Nov. 12, 2007, at age 61.

**Florence C. Davis** (M.Ed. '79/E), of Richmond, Va., Jan. 4, 2008, at age 79.

**Anthony J. DeMary Sr.\*** (M.S. '75/B), of Midlothian, Va., Nov. 12, 2007, at age 60.

**Richard G. Engels\*** (B.A. '72/H&S), of Richmond, Va., Dec. 1, 2007.

**Jeffrey L. Fetta** (B.F.A. '75/A), of Richmond, Va., Nov. 21, 2007, at age 59.

**Ruth Helen Chambers Little** (M.Ed. '74/E), of Tappahannock, Va., June 22, 2007, at age 85. She was formerly a high school and elementary school teacher and reading supervisor for Essex County Public Schools.

**Frank B. Lotts Jr.** (B.A. '71/H&S), of Richmond, Va., Nov. 16, 2007, at age 63.

**Virginia Talley Mitchell** (B.S. '74/H&S), of Mechanicsville, Va., Sept. 13, 2007, at age 55.

**Phyllis Moyer** (M.S.W. '76/SW), of Mechanicsville, Va., Nov. 6, 2007, at age 60.

**Peggy C. Adams**  
**Ann L. Ahearn**  
**Daniel J. Arbogast**  
**Carlton J. Bagley Jr.**  
**Jean Clary Bagley**  
**Melanie B. Becker**

**Janice F. Bell**  
**Stewart W. Bell**  
**Joanne L. Bluhm**  
**Bonnie J. Burton**  
**T. Neal Burton II**  
**Alison L. Cain**  
**Diane A. Chandler**  
**Donna M. Dalton**  
**Jeanne E. Decker, Ph.D.**  
**Deborah P. Ellis**  
**Monique Farrington**  
**Germaine S. Fauntleroy, Ph.D.**  
**Amy R. Frith**  
**Edward R. Gammon**  
**Gary W. Garland**  
**Montrese L. Garner-Sampson**  
**Donald J. Gee**  
**Scott Gibbs**  
**Rose E. Gilliam**  
**Martin W. Goehle**  
**James W. Gruenhagen**  
**Linda K. Gruenhagen**  
**Serita V. Hamilton-Edloe**

**Michael S. Hancock**  
**Stephen C. Harvey**  
**Virginia W. Harvey**  
**Jodie L. Hayob**  
**Katherine R. Hendrixson**  
**Dr. Betty A. Howe**  
**John W. Johnson II**  
**Dale Christina Kalkofen, Ed.D.**  
**Paige L. Larson**  
**Calvin B. LaSmith**  
**Caroline M. Lee**  
**Shruti A. Manek**  
**Robert E. Marchant, Ph.D.**  
**Anne G. Marean**  
**Kenneth W. Martin**  
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**Neil C. McLaughlin III**  
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**Bruce M. Miller**  
**Donald L. Newcomb**  
**Judy K. Newcomb**  
**Thomas P. Oakley**  
**William R. O'Connell Jr., D.Ed.**  
**Erin O'Toole-Lyon**  
**Stephen H. Parham**  
**Joshua Pretlow III**

**Patricia A. Prout**  
**William C. Prout**  
**Jodi B. Reid**  
**Michele F. Richards**  
**Scott S. Richards**  
**Shawn R. Sampson**  
**Ellis A. Sasser**  
**Georgeann Schmied**  
**Harry E. Seals**  
**Louise Seals**  
**Pamela A. Somma**  
**Alison C. Spencer**  
**Paul T. Steucke**  
**Dr. Marjorie Anne Stuckle**  
**Brian Taylor**  
**Lisa L. Taylor**  
**Dee Thomas**  
**Norman R. Tingle Jr., M.D.**  
**Mary Ellen Tisdale**  
**Laura A. Travis**  
**Lonni E. Trykowski**  
**Claudia Duck Tucker**  
**Jeffrey D. Vaughan**  
**Mark P. Vergnano**  
**Robert C. Vogler**  
**Robert Paul Wiedemer**  
**Patricia I. Wright, Ed.D.**  
**Iwanna Zawhorodny**  
**Daisy Liu Zhang, Ph.D.**

List includes individuals who joined the VCU Alumni Association or the African-American Alumni Council as lifetime members between July 1, 2007, and Dec. 31, 2007.

**James C.L. Muzik** (B.S. '78/H&S), of Richmond, Va., Dec. 23, 2007, at age 61.

**Martha Hill Newell** (B.F.A. '79/A), of Mechanicsville, Va., Nov. 1, 2007, at age 52.

**Karen Stumpf Nuckols** (B.S. '79/B), of Richmond, Va., Jan. 5, 2008, at age 57.

**Brenda S. Quinby** (M.A. '78/A; M.S. '93/AHP), of Richmond, Va., Oct. 2, 2007, at age 60.

**Eleanor S. Sturgis** (B.S. '77/H&S; M.Ed. '80/E), of Eastville, Va., Feb. 2, 2008.

**Nancy D. Truitt** (B.F.A. '79/A), of Annandale, Va., Oct. 5, 2007, at age 52.

**Margaret Reid Watkins** (M.Ed. '79/E), of Richmond, Va., Sept. 9, 2007, at age 58.

**Douglas C. Watson\*** (B.S. '75/B), of Richmond, Va., Sept. 25, 2007, at age 60.

**Margaret Edith Wingfield** (B.F.A. '76/A), of San Francisco, Calif., Dec. 27, 2007, at age 52.

## 1980s

**Virginia S. Daughtrey** (B.S. '86/E), of Richmond, Va., Nov. 3, 2007, at age 67.

**Frederick D. German** (B.S. '83/H&S), of Richmond, Va., Oct. 1, 2007, at age 52.

**Martha M. Hall** (M.A. '81/H&S), of Farnham, Va., Sept. 29, 2007, at age 60.

## 1990s

**Carlton C. Candler** (M.T. '94/E), of New York, N.Y., Jan. 6, 2008, at age 46.

**Hylan Q. Carter Jr.** (Cert. '97/H&S), of Richmond, Va., Oct. 1, 2007, at age 59.

**Mary C. Dunn** (B.S. '92/H&S), of McLean, Va., Sept. 22, 2007, at age 40.

**Anita R. Foster** (B.S.W. '96/SW; M.S.W. '98/SW), of Richmond, Va., Dec. 30, 2007, at age 48.

**Charles P. Liesfeld** (B.S. '95/B), of Richmond, Va., Sept. 8, 2007, at age 52.

**Courtney L. Sheap** (B.A. '90/H&S), of North Wales, Pa., Sept. 9, 2007, at age 44.

**Martha M. Shelton** (B.S. '98/MC), of Chester, Va., Oct. 1, 2007, at age 37.

**Paul E. Smith** (B.A. '92/H&S), of River Edge, N.J., Oct. 6, 2007, at age 37.

**Catherine S. Turner** (Cert. '90/B; M.S. '07/B), of Maidens, Va., Sept. 2, 2007, at age 55.

**Michael Lance Wieringo** (B.F.A. '91/A), of Durham, N.C., Aug. 12, 2007, at age 44. He was a comic artist who drew for "Doc Savage: The Man of Bronze," "Robin," "Superman" and "Spiderman," as well as DC Comics' "The Flash" and Marvel Comics' "The Fantastic Four." In 1999, Wieringo also created his own comic, "Tellos," with comic-book writer and friend Todd DeZago.

# Abbreviation key

Alumni are identified by degree, year and college or school.

## College and schools

H&S	College of Humanities and Sciences
A	School of the Arts
AHP	School of Allied Health Professions
B	School of Business
D	School of Dentistry
E	School of Education
En	School of Engineering
GPA	L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs
GS	Graduate School
LS	VCU Life Sciences
M	School of Medicine
MC	School of Mass Communications
N	School of Nursing
P	School of Pharmacy
SW	School of Social Work
WS	School of World Studies

## Degrees

A.S.	Associate Degree
Cert.	Certificate
B.F.A.	Bachelor of Fine Arts
B.G.S.	Bachelor of General Studies
B.I.S.	Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies
B.M.	Bachelor of Music
B.M.E.	Bachelor of Music Education
B.S.	Bachelor of Science
B.S.W.	Bachelor of Social Work
D.D.S.	Doctor of Dental Surgery
D.N.A.R.	Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice
D.P.A.	Doctor of Public Administration
D.P.T.	Doctor of Physical Therapy
M.A.	Master of Arts
M.Acc.	Master of Accountancy
M.A.E.	Master of Art Education
M.B.A.	Master of Business Administration
M.Fin.	Master of Informatics
M.D.	Doctor of Medicine
M.Ed.	Master of Education
M.Env.	Master of Environmental Studies
M.F.A.	Master of Fine Arts
M.H.A.	Master of Health Administration
M.I.S.	Master of Interdisciplinary Studies
M.M.	Master of Music
M.M.E.	Master of Music Education
M.P.A.	Master of Public Administration
M.P.H.	Master of Public Health
M.P.S.	Master of Pharmaceutical Sciences
M.S.	Master of Science
M.S.A.T.	Master of Science in Athletic Training
M.S.D.	Master of Science in Dentistry
M.S.H.A.	Master of Science in Health Administration
M.S.N.A.	Master of Science in Nurse Anesthesia
M.S.O.T.	Master of Science in Occupational Therapy
M.S.W.	Master of Social Work
M.T.	Master of Teaching
M.Tox.	Master of Toxicology
M.U.R.P.	Master of Urban and Regional Planning
O.T.D.	Post-professional Occupational Therapy Doctorate
Pharm.D.	Doctor of Pharmacy
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy

\* Member of the VCU Alumni Association

Mary M. Willis (B.G.S. '97/H&S), of Richmond, Va., Oct. 1, 2007, at age 38.

## 2000s

Eric J. Clark (B.I.S. '03/H&S), of Richmond, Va., Oct. 1, 2007, at age 30.

Mudiwa S. Dotson (BSW '07/SW), of Richmond, Va., Dec. 1, 2007, at age 24.

Sue S. Keener (B.S. '02/B), of Richmond, Va., Oct. 9, 2007, at age 55.

Justin L. Rose\* (B.S. '06/B), of Richmond, Va., Sept. 21, 2007, at age 24.

Deborah M. Smith (B.S. '03/H&S), of Richmond, Va., Sept. 8, 2007, at age 31.

Antonina Vitale (M.S.W. '06/SW), of Gloucester, Va., June 2, 2007, at age 66.

## Faculty and staff

William Dobbie, of Richmond, Va., Sept. 7, 2007, at age 67. He graduated from St. Lawrence University in 1963 with a B.A. in English and went on to earn master's degrees from Columbia University and California State University and a Doctor of Education degree from the University of Virginia. He came to VCU in 1978 as an assistant dean for student services in the College of Humanities and Sciences, a position he held until 1983. He returned to VCU in 1985 and worked for 12 years in the financial aid office.

W. Avon Drake, Ph.D., associate professor of political science in VCU's L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, March 14, 2008, at age 61. Drake joined VCU in 1986 as an assistant professor of political science and director of African-American studies, a role in which he continued until 1993. He served as an associate professor of political science until his retirement in January 2008. Drake co-authored "Affirmative Action and the Stalled Quest for Black Progress," which received the annual Outstanding Book Award from the National Conference of Black Political Scientists in 1997.

Francis Merrill Foster Sr., of Richmond, Va., Jan. 6, 2008. Foster practiced dentistry in the Jackson Ward neighborhood of Richmond from 1948 until his retirement in 1989 and served as an assistant professor of general practice dentistry at VCU.

John Mahoney, of Richmond, Va., Dec. 23, 2007. An associate professor, he joined the VCU Department of Psychology in 1971. He had served on the VCU Libraries Advisory Committee, the College of Humanities and Sciences Faculty Council and the college's honors board. The college has established a scholarship in Mahoney's name. Contributions to the scholarship fund can be made online at [www.has.vcu.edu](http://www.has.vcu.edu).

Paul D. Minton, of Roanoke, Va., July 10, 2007, at age 88. Minton was a retired professor of statistics at VCU and Southern Methodist University, as well as the former dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at VCU.

Christina Turner, of Richmond, Va., Jan. 13, 2008. An associate professor of anthropology, she joined VCU in 1994 and helped in the establishment of the School of World Studies in 2003. She was a Fulbright Scholar and editor of the Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies Essays from 2003 to 2006. She and her husband, Brian, served as Peace Corps volunteers in Paraguay from 1984 to 1986. The School of World Studies has established the Dr. Christina Turner Writing Award. Contributions to the fund can be made online at [www.has.vcu.edu](http://www.has.vcu.edu).

## Friends of VCU

Virginia Clare Hobson, of Dover, N.H., July 4, 2007, at age 81. A supporter of VCU, Hobson taught kindergarten at Woodland School in Gurnee, Ill., until her retirement.

## WHAT'S NEW?

Shafer Court Connections welcomes updates on job changes, marriages, relocations — whatever is newsworthy. Help us keep track of you by sending your news to:

[shafercourt@vcu.edu](mailto:shafercourt@vcu.edu)

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Virginia Commonwealth University



# University food measures an *'Upper Cut'* above the rest

by Kelli Craig

Restaurant-inspired dining centers are surfacing on campuses across the country, including here at Virginia Commonwealth University. But many alumni haven't forgotten about cafeteria-style eateries, which cemented their own place in college history.

**Lois Lindholm** (B.F.A. '54/A) says she loved the food served in the cafeteria — located in the basement of Founders Hall along Franklin Street — during her college years at Richmond Professional Institute, now VCU.

That's if she could recognize it.

"All the food was really Southern and the ladies behind the counter used to laugh at me because I didn't know what it was," says Lindholm, who considers herself a Yankee. Over the years she came to love the popular Southern side dish of grits, a staple at every meal.

The dimly lit dining center moved to the first floor of the Hibbs Building in the fall of 1967. The university saw the need for more space — with the growing enrollment — and more food options.

When **Christal Holmes** (B.S. '05/B), an admissions counselor with the VCU Office of Undergraduate Admissions, was a VCU student, she says "the dining rooms were set up much like those in a high school cafeteria — long tables with chairs squeezed together side by side."

The longevity of Hibbs spanned more than three decades. But as college campuses changed, so did the dining, and VCU wanted to be at the forefront of the new trends.

The newest VCU dining facility, Shafer Court Dining Center, opened in the fall of 2004. The \$18 million, 56,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility contains Market 810, a large dining area, located on the second floor atop a spiraling staircase.

The award-winning design represents the next step in college dining, *marché*. This cutting-edge, market-style concept brings the kitchen in front of the students to individual kiosks, providing for made-to-order dishes.

VCU student Courtney McCullough, 19, lives in Ackell Residence Center and isn't required to have a meal plan but does. The sophomore sees "the Shaf" as a great meeting place for friends.

"I get excited about beef brisket day," McCullough says.

Other than the food, Shafer has a different ambience than past VCU dining centers, Holmes says.

Compared to Founders' basement and the first floor of the old Hibbs Building, Market 810 offers brightly colored walls and surrounding windows that allow for more natural light. Wandering around

the upstairs, students can choose from stir-fry, sushi, fresh salads, turkey burgers or pizza. Shafer also offers an inclusive vegetarian menu, something Hibbs did not. For a few more meal swipes, or extra money, students can dine on crab cakes, calamari or steak — options known as Upper Cuts.

"We wanted to create a beautiful facility with state-of-the-art equipment and 'Upper Cut' options so that students would reflect on their student-life dining experiences as great ones," says **Diane Reynolds** (B.S. '79/B; M.B.A. '04/B), director of VCU's Department of Business Services, which oversees university dining.

From Founders to Hibbs and now Shafer Court, VCU's dining options have expanded through the years to satisfy the growing student population.

The choices and food variety have come a long way since Lindholm's days of fried chicken and grilled cheese. She even remembers paying extra for the iced tea.

"But it was worth it," she says. "I remember the iced tea was wonderful, absolutely wonderful. We used to get two glasses at a time."

*Kelli Craig is a contributing writer for Shafer Court Connections.*

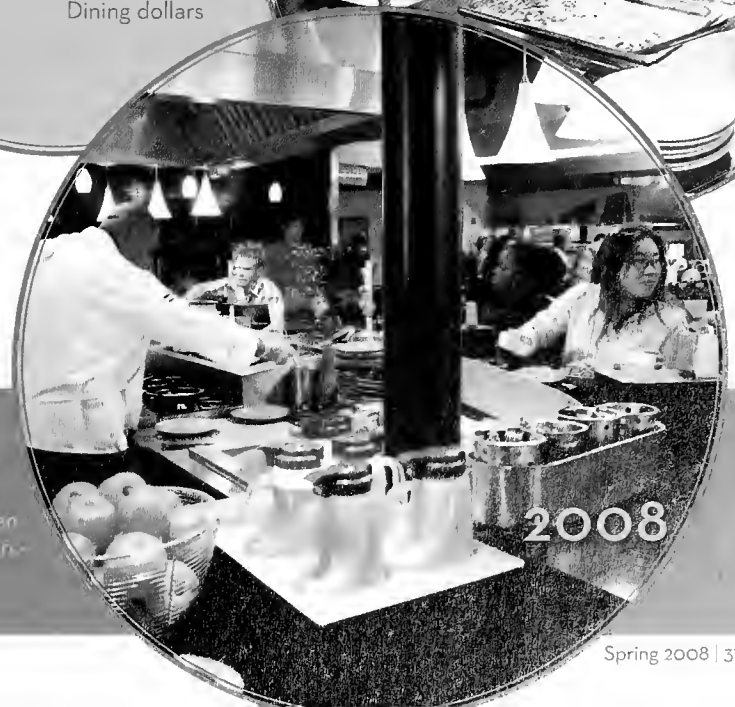
## University dining

### 1970s

Iced tea  
Lunch ladies  
Fish sandwich  
Cafeteria-style  
Meal tickets

### 2008

Green tea  
Chefs  
Sushi  
Marché-style  
Dining dollars



VCU dining evolves with societal trends and students' ever-changing taste buds.

[Then] In the early 1970s, students lined up for cafeteria-style meals at the dining center located in the Hibbs Building.

[Now] Today, a myriad of different fare — including vegetarian, Mongolian and American — are created and served in front of the students at the award-winning, 56,000-square-foot Shafer Court Dining Center.

Top photo: Special Collections and Archives, VCU Libraries. Bottom photo: Robert Benson

# Datebook

Mark your calendars for these Virginia Commonwealth University and VCU Alumni Association events. For more alumni activities, go to [www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org) or [www.vcu-aaac.org](http://www.vcu-aaac.org), or visit <http://events.vcu.edu> for campus happenings.

## MAY

May 9-18

**Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition,  
Round 2**

Anderson Gallery  
(804) 828-1522

May 10

**VCU Music: Greater Richmond Bands**  
W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts  
(804) 828-1169

May 17



**Spring Commencement**

**Alumni Stars reception\***

Snead Hall  
(804) 828-2586

**Commencement Breakfast\***

Location TBD  
(804) 828-2586

**Spring Commencement**

Richmond Coliseum  
(804) 828-1917

May 22

**VCUAA Board of Directors Meeting\***

University Student Commons  
(804) 828-2856

TBD

**African-American Alumni Council  
Meeting\***

Robertson Alumni House  
(804) 828-2586

## JUNE

June 4-13

**Alumni Campus Abroad Trip: French  
Riviera\***

(804) 828-2586

June 14

**African-American Alumni Council  
Meeting\***

Robertson Alumni House  
(804) 828-2586

## JULY

July 2-15

**Alumni Campus Abroad Trip: Ukraine  
on the Dnieper River\***

(804) 828-2586

## SEPTEMBER

Sept. 13

**The Daedalus Quartet**

W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts  
(804) 828-1169

Sept. 17-29

**Alumni Campus Abroad Trip: China  
Discovery\***

(804) 828-2586



The Daedalus Quartet

Sept. 16

**26th Opening Faculty Address and Convocation**  
Hermes A. Kontos Medical Sciences Building  
(804) 828-6162

## OCTOBER

Oct. 20-24

**Friends of the Library Annual Book Sale**  
James Branch Cabell Library

(804) 828-1105



Friends of the Library Annual Book Sale

Oct. 24-26

**Fall Fest**

Various events/locations  
(804) 828-6500

Oct. 25

**Awadagin Pratt, piano**

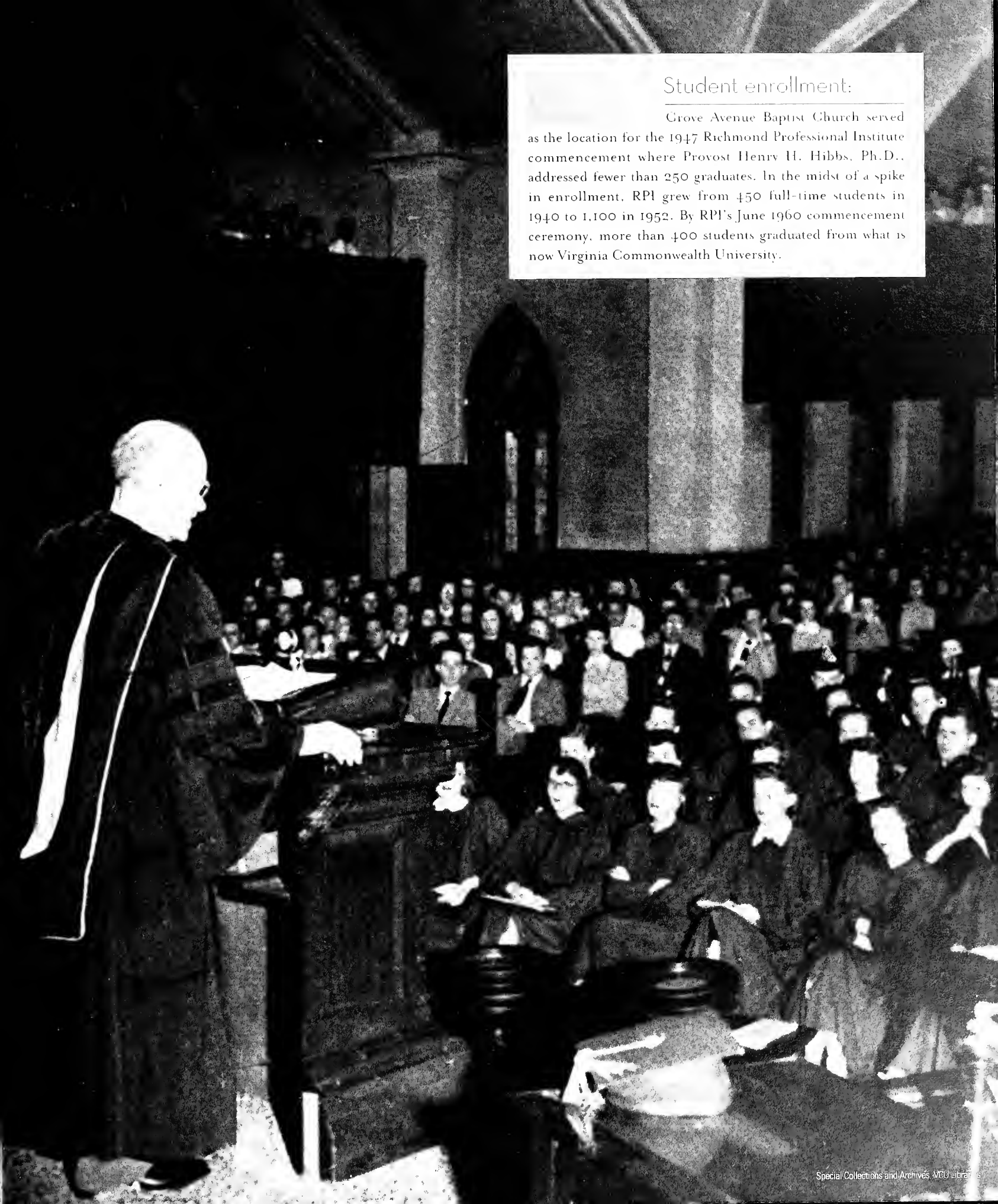
W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts  
(804) 828-1169

\*VCUAA events



## Student enrollment:

Grove Avenue Baptist Church served as the location for the 1947 Richmond Professional Institute commencement where Provost Henry H. Hibbs, Ph.D., addressed fewer than 250 graduates. In the midst of a spike in enrollment, RPI grew from 450 full-time students in 1940 to 1,100 in 1952. By RPI's June 1960 commencement ceremony, more than 400 students graduated from what is now Virginia Commonwealth University.



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Virginia Commonwealth University



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